

# THE PSALMS

TRANSLATED WITH  
TEXT-CRITICAL AND  
EXEGETICAL NOTES

VOLUME II

A full length Commentary on the Psalms, designed both for the advanced student and the general reader, has long been recognised as the outstanding need in English biblical theology. The present book will more than fulfil expectations.

W. O. E. OESTERLEY, D.D.



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VOL. II



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*by*

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## PSALM 66

IN reading through this psalm a question almost inevitably suggests itself; is it a unity, or have we here a combination of two psalms, viz. vv. 1-12 and 13-20? In the former, the early history of Israel is recalled, and all the earth is bidden to praise God for the manifestation of his power on behalf of his people. In the latter the subject-matter is quite different; it speaks of one who is about to enter the house of God for the purpose of offering sacrifices in fulfilment of vows; and he bids his fellow-worshippers listen while he tells them of God's mercy which had been accorded to him. In favour of unity of authorship it can be urged that in the former half the psalmist recalls God's mercies shown towards the people, and in the latter half towards himself, thus offering a kind of parallelism. But it must be confessed that in reading the psalm through this strikes one as forced. The one point of parallelism is only partial; the people have been delivered from enemies; but the deliverance spoken of in the second part is not from enemies. The repeated invitation to the nations of the earth to praise God which occurs in the first part, has nothing corresponding to it in the second; while, on the other hand, the stress laid on offerings in the second part is not paralleled by anything in the first. If both parts had come from the same writer a more definite and pointed correspondence between the two would assuredly have been in evidence. The conclusion is, therefore, forced upon us that we have here two psalms, or parts of them, which have been joined together, as in some other cases (*e.g.*, Ps. 40<sup>14-18</sup> = Ps. 70). This joining together of literary pieces containing different subject-matter is easily accounted for owing to the vicissitudes of transmission. Material, whether skins, papyrus, or what-not, for writing on was precious; an open space left at the conclusion of a psalm might well have been utilized by filling it in with another psalm, or part of one, if the space was insufficient for the whole; the main thing was to preserve the holy words which had been handed down. We have an instructive illustration of this—though belonging to far later times—in the five “psalms of David” (a Syriac translation), which have been written on an open space in the middle of a treatise of the Nestorian Bishop, Elijah of Anbar (tenth cent.)<sup>1</sup>; obviously an open space in the MS. was utilized for preserving these psalms; a proceeding of which there are plenty of examples. If this was done in these late times, how much more in earlier days when materials were far more scarce.

<sup>1</sup> See Noth, “Die fünf syrisch überlieferten apokryphen Psalmen,” in *ZAW* 1930, pp. 1-23. One of these psalms is the 151st in the Septuagint.





have them acknowledge God: *How terrible, i.e., awe-inspiring, are thy works!*; they are made to say that they recognize *the greatness of his might* for which reason his *enemies cringe before him*; the word means to feign, or make a pretence, the idea being that even though God's *enemies* do not worship him, yet the *greatness of his might* compels them to make a show of doing so. 5-7. Still addressing *all the earth*, the psalmist bids the nations *Come, and behold the works of God*, whereby is meant that they should contemplate with their minds' eye the awe-inspiring acts which, in the distant past, God had wrought for his people, spoken of as *the children of men*. *The works of God*, to which the psalmist refers, are mentioned because they had been directly connected with *the nations*: first, there is the divine act of *turning the sea to dry-land*, in reference to Exod. 14<sup>16, 21, 22</sup>, "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry-land" (the passage through the "Red" sea); then, suggested by this, the psalmist says that *they went through the river on foot*, in reference to Josh. 3<sup>9-17</sup>, where it is told of how "all Israel passed over on dry ground, until all the nation were passed clean over Jordan". And lastly, when he speaks of *his eyes keeping watch on the nations, that the rebellious exalt not themselves*, the psalmist has in mind the victories of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, over the surrounding nations. Thus, in each case *the nations* were, according to the divine will, and with God's help, defeated. Hence the psalmist's appeal to the nations of his day to contemplate *the works of God* in the past, with the implied injunction that they should acknowledge him. Therefore he continues (8, 9): *Bless, O ye peoples, our God*. But when he goes on to say, *who preserveth our soul in life, and suffereth not our foot to be moved*, it sounds, at first, a little incongruous that the nations should be called upon to *bless God* because of the mercies vouchsafed to the people of Israel; but the underlying idea is based upon such passages as Isa. 60<sup>3-6</sup>, 61<sup>9</sup>, 66<sup>19</sup>; the nations, being joined to Israel, will become worthy of partaking of their blessings. 10-12. The psalmist's thoughts then revert to the past history of his people: *Thou hast tried us, O God* (cp. Jer. 9<sup>7</sup>); *thou hast tested us as silver is tested* (cp. Isa. 48<sup>10</sup>); *thou didst bring us into the net* (for the thought cp. Ezek. 12<sup>13</sup>, 17<sup>20</sup>, 32<sup>3</sup>, but the word for "net" in the last passage is different); *didst lay a chain upon our loins*, the word for "chain" is Aramaic, and occurs here only, it is rendered "chain" in the Targum (Hans Schmidt *in loc.*); *thou didst cause men to ride over our head* recalls Isa. 51<sup>23</sup>; and *we went through fire and water* is clearly taken from Isa. 43<sup>2</sup>; *but thou didst bring us into a wide place*, must refer to the homeland, Palestine. It would thus seem that the psalmist has the Babylonian Exile and the Return in mind here. The evident references to exilic and post-exilic writings point to the date of the psalm. 13-15. The entire change of subject, without any connecting link with what has preceded is one of

the reasons for regarding this second section as being an independent composition, possibly only part of some other psalm. The words of 13-15 are uttered by one who is about to *pay* his *vows* as a thank-offering for deliverance from *trouble*. The abundance of these offerings has led some commentators to suppose that they were brought on behalf of others, but the repetition of the "I" shows this to be untenable. Possibly the words are not to be taken too literally; or the offerer may have been a wealthy man. By *the incense of rams* is meant the smoke rising from the burning of the sacrifice (cp. Gen. 8<sup>21</sup>). 16-20. The psalmist then calls on *all that fear God* to listen while he tells them what *God hath done for his soul, i.e., for his personal self*, adding in parenthesis that *if there had been iniquity in his heart, God would not have heard him*; what this was he puts in few, but none the less significant, words: *God hath heard me, he hath hearkened unto the voice of my prayer*. And he concludes with blessing God, *who hath not withdrawn his love (hesed) from me*.

### *Religious Teaching*

For the universalistic thought of this psalm, cp. pp. 81 f. Three other matters may be briefly referred to, though they will come before us again. The first is the emphasis laid on gratitude for past mercies. The reference is to mercies vouchsafed to the nation; but it is taught that every generation should recall, and be grateful for the mercies of which the nation as a whole had been the recipients in the past; and it is implied that each generation benefits by these, and ought therefore to show forth their gratitude for them. This gives food for thought. It is probably true to say that few people realize how much they have to be thankful for owing to the divine guidance of national history in the past. Here we have, then, brought to our minds something which is well worth pondering over.

Another thing which the psalm teaches is the duty of rendering to God, so far as this is possible for man, a return for his many loving-kindnesses. The psalmist does this by offering sacrifices; but the main thing is the principle involved; and for Christians this could not be better expressed than in the familiar words of the Book of Common Prayer: "And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee."

And, lastly, there is the teaching on prayer. The gratitude felt by the psalmist for the answer to his prayer is such that he is impelled to proclaim it to others. As a rule, people hesitate to speak to others about their innermost religious experiences; and naturally so; but it is worth remembering that sometimes, in telling others of answer to prayer, it means witnessing for God, and may be the means of strengthening the

faith of others. One thing more ; the psalmist teaches that if there is iniquity in the heart prayer cannot be sincere ; how, in that case, can it be acceptable to God ?

### PSALM 67

THIS short, but beautiful, little psalm is pregnant with subject-matter illustrative of the best in Israelite religion. Both the occasion on which the psalm was sung, and therefore its whole interpretation, are indicated in the words of v. 6 : "The earth hath yielded her increase, Yahweh our God hath blessed us." This is clearly in reference to the harvest, the good yield of which calls forth praise and thanksgiving to God from the psalmist on behalf of himself and his people. It was therefore, in all probability, one of the psalms sung during the feast of Tabernacles. A little puzzling, at first sight, is the way in which the psalm opens : "O God,—may he be gracious unto us and bless us . . .", which is re-echoed in the concluding verse : "May God bless us". One might expect that, inasmuch as the harvest was past, the psalmist would be looking back, and say : "God hath been gracious unto us . . .", "God hath blest us". Indeed, some commentators emend the text to this effect. This is unnecessary, and fails to appreciate the spiritual mentality of the psalmist ; see further, the exegetical notes, and the section on the religious teaching of the psalm. Very striking is the teaching on universalism which is so prominent in the psalm ; with this we deal also, later. But it is worth noting here that in the Book of Common Prayer this psalm is appointed to be said, or sung, as an alternative to the *Nunc Dimittis* ; this was doubtless done owing to the universalistic spirit of our psalm, which was in accordance with the words : "To be a light to lighten the Gentiles".

A quaint usage with regard to this psalm by the Jewish mystics of the Middle Ages may be mentioned as illustrating the various uses to which psalms were put. What is called "the period of counting the 'Omer'" ("sheaf") was forty-nine days, *i.e.*, from Passover to Pentecost ; it was observed in accordance with Lev. 23<sup>10, 11, 15</sup> ; our psalm, in Hebrew, contains forty-nine words (including *Selah*, twice) ; therefore this psalm was brought into connexion with the forty-nine days, one word for each day ; and this word was uttered aloud on its day in the belief that it would have its beneficial effect on the utterer.

To interpret the psalm in an eschatological sense is to miss its import and religious spirit ; it deals with the present.

The developed religious sense points to a late post-exilic date ; and this is confirmed by the adoption of the "Aaronic blessing" (Num. 6<sup>24-26</sup>), belonging to the Priestly Code, in the opening verse.

The metre is 3 : 3, with the exception of the concluding verse, which is 2 : 2 : 2.

1. *For the Precentor : On stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.*
- 1 (2). O God,—may he be gracious unto us and bless us, may he cause his face to shine upon us. Selah.
- 2 (3). That ° his ways ° may be known on earth, ° his saving-health ° among all nations ;
- 3 (4). Let the peoples thank thee, O God, let all the peoples thank thee ;
- 4 (5). Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy, for thou judgest ° the world in righteousness °, and guidest the nations of the earth. Selah.
- 5 (6). Let the peoples thank thee, O God, let all the peoples thank thee :
- 6 (7). The earth hath yielded her increase, ° Yahweh ° our God hath blessed us.
- 7 (8). May God bless us, and may they fear him, all the ends of the earth.

#### Text-critical Notes

2. Read, with S, יִרְכֵּי for יִרְכֶּה, "thy way"; and, with S, יְשׁוּעָתוֹ for יְשׁוּעָתָה, "thy saving health". 4. Add, with G, תִּבְלַל בְּצִדִּיק and תִּשְׁפֹּט, "God".

1. In devout thankfulness for the blessings of a good harvest (see v. 6), the psalmist cries, *O God*,—and the unexpressed words of gratitude welling up from his heart give place to the prayer that both he and his people, joint-recipients of divine mercies, may continue to be worthy of God's lovingkindness: *may he be gracious unto us, and bless us*; for the metaphorical expression, *may he cause his face to shine*, i.e., may he grant his favour, cp. Num. 6<sup>26</sup> and cp. Pss. 4<sup>6</sup>, 44<sup>3</sup>, 89<sup>15</sup>. This is not the way in which the verse is usually interpreted, but it is difficult to see its point on any other interpretation. Emending the text by putting the verbs into the perfect tense (so Gunkel) is too drastic, and misses, as we hold, its true import; and translating the verbs by imperatives (so E.V.V.) is too arbitrary, and contrary to Hebrew usage; and, again, it obscures the meaning of the verse. Our interpretation of the verse, we submit, is perfectly natural if one takes into consideration the deep spirituality and religious feeling of the psalmist as expressed all through the psalm (see further the final section). 2. This comes out forcibly in the psalmist's prayer that the people of Israel, through the divine favour vouchsafed to them, may be the means of spreading the knowledge of God abroad, *that his ways may be known on earth, his saving health among all nations*; and this, in the present connexion, has special reference to the blessings of a good harvest; *saving health*, often translated by "salvation", is used in various senses, among others, as here, of temporal blessings. Israel is to be Yahweh's witness that he, and he alone, is the giver of the fruits of the earth, so that (3) *the peoples may thank God*. This universalistic note, so prominent in some of the prophetic writings, especially Deutero-Isaiah, witnesses to an exalted conception of God on

the part of the psalmist ; he is not only the God of Israel, but the God of all peoples : 4. *Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy, for thou judgest the world in righteousness* ; the word " judge " is not to be understood in the sense of " condemn ", but, as often elsewhere, in that of " vindicate " (cp., e.g., Pss. 10<sup>18</sup>, 98<sup>9</sup>). Striking, too, is the thought that God *guides the nations of the earth*, the word is never used elsewhere in reference to the nations. And again (5), the psalmist calls upon the nations to *thank God*. Not until the psalm is almost ended does the psalmist directly make mention of the immediate cause for thankfulness : 6. *The earth hath yielded her increase, Yahweh our God hath blessed us* ; this is far from being merely an afterthought ; it required no earlier mention because to give thanks for the abundant harvest was the reason why the worshippers had gathered together ; it was uppermost in their minds. Temporal gifts are often spoken of as " blessings ", hence *Yahweh our God hath blessed us*. The psalmist closes his all too brief hymn of gratitude with a reiteration of the universalistic note so dear to him ; the divine blessing is not only for Israel, but for all men throughout the world who, through Israel, are to be brought to the knowledge of God, and the fear of him : *May God bless us, and may they fear him, all the ends of the earth* ; the words are put in this order for the purpose of keeping as closely as possible to that of the Hebrew text.

### *Religious Teaching*

Our first point here is in connexion with the apparent incongruity, to which reference has been made above, in the opening verse. With the thought of the good harvest which has been gathered in, the psalmist says : " O God,—may he be gracious unto us and bless us, may he cause his face to shine upon us " ; the words sound as though the harvest had not yet been gathered in. That, however, is not the case. The psalmist presents us here with a religious factor which is of profound significance and beauty : when a divine blessing has been granted, one of the first emotions in a man, like our psalmist, of real religious insight, is a sense of unworthiness ; and this is followed by the spontaneous and ardent wish that the blessing may be used aright ; this can be the case only if God's graciousness continues to be accorded ; hence the cry : " O God,—may he be gracious." Tested by individual experience, everyone will admit that in this respect the psalm presents us with an element in true religion which demands devout consideration.

Connected with this is the further teaching of the psalm on the subject of gratitude. Only too often temporal benefits, especially in regard to " our daily bread ", are taken as a matter of course, without the remotest thought of him who is the Giver of " every good and perfect gift ". Modern life, and modern methods of providing food, are apt to make us forget whence, ultimately, all our sustenance comes ; it is well

to think sometimes, when enjoying our meals, of the Creator who made the earth and the fulness thereof; and to be thankful to him. Our psalm teaches not only the fitness of being thankful for a good harvest, which meant sufficiency of food, but also how gratitude should be shown forth—namely, by proclaiming among others the goodness of God.

The psalm has teaching on two other subjects which can only be described as illimitable in their importance: Universalism, and the conception of God connected with it; but as these are dealt with in Vol. I, pp. 81 ff., we refrain from discussing them here.

### PSALM 68

It may safely be said that no other piece in the Psalter offers the student difficulties so great as those presented by Ps. 68. The majority of scholars, attempting to find a single (or even a double) thread running through it, are reduced to a theory of textual corruption so extensive as to necessitate a practical rewriting of the whole, and, even so, the results are never quite satisfactory. Gunkel obviously finds it nearly impossible to classify the psalm, and Bittenwieser is driven to the expedient of assuming that two pieces (one of them by the author of Judg. 5) have been closely interwoven with one another. We can solve the problem only on the hypothesis, advanced also by Hans Schmidt, that it is not strictly a single poem at all, but is a collection of sentences and phrases taken from a number of different poems, and strung together haphazard. It is almost as if a page from the index to a hymn-book (though the fragments are seldom taken from the opening lines of their respective poems) had strayed into the text.

It is true that a number of the "quotations" cannot be referred to any known source, but it is only to be expected that the compiler should have access to great stores of Hebrew literature which have not otherwise survived. Some of them were evidently of high poetic quality, and we must be grateful for the little that has come down to us. The psalm contains, too, an abnormal number of words and forms which do not occur elsewhere in the Bible. We realize that we know only a small fraction of a great literature, rich in powerful and imaginative poetry, and with a much larger vocabulary than we should have suspected if we relied solely on the scanty material contained within the limits of the Old Testament.

The purpose of the compilation is far from clear. It can hardly have been intended, as Hans Schmidt supposes, for the Enthronement festival (see Vol. I, pp. 46 ff.); some of the passages are quite unsuitable for such a ceremonial. In fact, none of the recognized occasions

would involve the use of all the poems from which extracts have been taken.

It is generally agreed that the text must have suffered considerably in the course of transmission. We must, however, remember that in brief snatches of poetry, such as we have in this psalm, words often appear meaningless when a fuller context would render them intelligible. The Versions help us only in a few instances; even the renderings of the Septuagint seem at times to be pure conjecture, helping us neither to understand nor to correct the traditional Hebrew text.

It is obviously impossible to date a compilation like this. Parts may be very ancient; the "Song of Deborah" is one of the sources. On the other hand, there are indications (mainly philological) of a very late period, and the psalm, in its present form, must be assigned to the latest age permitted by the general history of the Psalter.

The metre is naturally varied, though each extract seems to be uniform within itself. The metre of each fragment is indicated between brackets in the exegetical notes which follow the translation.

1. *For the Precentor : David's. A Psalm. A Song.*

- |          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| 1 (2).   | God ariseth !<br>Let them that hate him flee before him,<br>As wax melteth<br>Let the wicked perish          | Let his foes be scattered !<br>2 (3). as smoke ° is driven ° . ° °<br>before the fire,<br>before God.<br>let them exult before God. |
| 3 (4).   | But let the righteous be glad ;<br>And let them rejoice with gladness  | . . . . .   |
| 4 (5).   | Sing unto God, hymn his name,<br>° Yah ° is his name ; exult ye<br>before him,                               | build a highway for him that rideth<br>through the wilderness.<br>. . . . .   |
| 5 (6).   | The orphan's father,<br>is God in his holy dwelling.   | the widow's judge,  |
| 6 (7).   | God restoreth the lonely to a home,<br>But the rebellious dwell in the white-hot land,                       | bringeth out prisoners into prosperity.   |
| 7 (8).   | O God, when thou wentest forth,<br>before thy people,  | didst stride through the waste,   |
| 8 (9).   | Earth quaked,<br>yea, the heavens dripped,<br>before God ;<br>Yon Sinai<br>before God,<br>the God of Israel. |   |
| 9 (10).  | Rain, freely given,<br>° The sick ° and the weary  | ° thou pouredst down °, O God.<br>thou ° didst confirm °.   |
| 10 (11). | ° With thy food are satisfied °<br>Thou dost establish by thy goodness                                       | the . . . . .<br>the afflicted, O God.  |
| 11 (12). | The Lord giveth utterance,   | a great host are they that bring glad tidings.  |
| 12 (13). | The kings of the hosts<br>and the beauty of the house divideth the spoil.                                    | flee—they flee !  |





## Text-critical Notes

2. Read  $\text{בְּהַקְדֵּחַ}$  for  $\text{בְּהַקְדֵּחַ}$ . Om. "thou shalt drive" (doublet). 4. Read, with G,  $\text{יָהּ}$  for "in Yah". 9. Read, with Lagarde,  $\text{תַּשִּׁיחַ}$  for "thou shalt wave". Read, with Duhm,  $\text{בְּחִלָּה}$  for "thine inheritance". Read (cp. Buhl)  $\text{פְּרִנְתָּהּ}$  for "thou didst establish it". 10. Read, with Graetz,  $\text{יִשְׁבְּעוּ}$  for "thy animal shall dwell". 16. Read  $\text{בְּתוֹכָם}$  for  $\text{בְּתוֹכָם}$ . 17. Read, with Olshausen,  $\text{בְּתוֹכָם}$  for "in them, Sinai". 18. Read, with S,  $\text{לִפְנֵי יְהוָה}$  for "to dwell, Yah (is) God". 23. Read, with G,  $\text{תִּרְצֹץ}$  for "thou mayest shatter". Read  $\text{יָרֵחַ}$  for "from enemies, from him". 24. Read, with Wellhausen,  $\text{רָאוּ הַלֵּילוֹת}$  for "they have seen thy festal trains". 25. Read (cp. Graetz)  $\text{בְּתוֹכָם}$  for "in the midst of". 26. Read  $\text{מִבְּמַקְוֵה}$  (cp. Deut. 33<sup>4</sup>) for  $\text{בְּמַקְוֵה}$ . Read, with Buhl,  $\text{מִבְּמַקְוֵה}$  for "from the fountain of". 27. Read, with Gressmann (cited by Gunkel),  $\text{אֶחָד}$  for "a small one treading them down" (or "slumbering"). 28. Read, with G,  $\text{צִוָּה}$  for "he commanded". 30. Read, with Gunkel,  $\text{חַיָּוָה}$  for "beast". Read, with Matthes (cited by Cheyne)  $\text{בְּעֵלֵי}$  for "calves of". Read  $\text{מִתַּרְפִּים}$  (cp. Arab. *tarafa*) for "humbling himself" (?). 32. Read, with G,  $\text{לְאֲדָנִי}$  for  $\text{לְאֲדָנִי}$ . Om. "heavens of" (doublet). 34. Read, with Gunkel,  $\text{עַל}$  for "upon". 35. Read, with G,  $\text{מִבְּמַקְוֵה}$  for "from thy sanctuaries". Read, with G,  $\text{לְעַמּוֹ}$  for "to the people".

The first fragment in this psalm (vs. 1-3; metre: 2 : 2, with 3 : 2 in 1<sup>b-2a</sup>) is taken from a hymn of praise, and the surviving sentences are based on Num. 10<sup>35</sup>. Enough remains to show the familiar contrast, presented, e.g., in Ps. 1, between the fate of the wicked and that of the righteous. The words in *Numbers* are the formula to be recited when the Ark was taken out to battle, but here it does not seem that a foreign enemy is in view. The two metaphors, the *smoke driven* before the wind and the *wax melting before the fire*, are familiar in Hebrew poetic imagery, cp. for the former, Is. 51<sup>6</sup>, Hos. 13<sup>3</sup>, Pss. 37<sup>20</sup>, 102<sup>4</sup>, and for the latter, Mic. 1<sup>4</sup>, Pss. 22<sup>15</sup>, 97<sup>5</sup>.

V. 4 (metre: 4 : 3) seems to be the opening verse of another hymn of praise perhaps belonging to the type which embodies a historical retrospect. The phrase *build a highway* has given much trouble to commentators who regard the psalm as a unity, but falls naturally into its place in a poem recalling (or describing) the return from the Exile. We may compare Is. 57<sup>14</sup>, 62<sup>10</sup>. The divine name *Yah* occurs here for the first time in the Psalter. It is found fifty times in the Old Testament, rather more than half the number being in the form "Hallelujah" or similar phrases. In the pre-exilic literature it appears in Ex. 15<sup>2</sup>, 17<sup>16</sup> (though the text is sometimes disputed in both cases); other passages are probably all post-exilic. It seems to be a contraction for Yahweh, though it has been held in some quarters that *Yah* is the primitive form, of which the normal Yahweh is a reduplication.

The third extract, vs. 5-6 (metre 4 : 3) is taken from a poem of the same general type as the first, though there are differences in the mode of application. Here we have the contrast between the depressed and helpless classes, the *orphan*, the *widow*, and the *lonely* (a unique, though

obvious sense for the Hebrew word) and the *rebellious*—the wilful and the headstrong. Two words call for special comment. The meaning *into prosperity*, for a form not found elsewhere in Hebrew, is based on the assumption that it is a late importation from Aramaic; the root occurs only in Hebrew of the fourth century and later. In Arabic, however, it implies “breaking”, and the word may be an adverbial accusative, suggesting the shattering of prison bars and doors. The word for “white-hot land”, too, occurs only here, and calls up a picture of a desolate world, whose limestone rocks reflect the burning rays of the Oriental sun.

The fourth piece, *vv.* 7–8 (metre : 2 : 2 : 2), is taken almost *verbatim* from Judg. 5<sup>4</sup>, and suggests that that poem may have had a place in some form of liturgy.

*Vv.* 9–10 (metre : 2 : 2), like so much else in this psalm, are drawn from a hymn of thanksgiving for benefits received, especially by the helpless, the *sick*, the *weary*, and the *afflicted*. The parallelism shows that there is a gap in the first line of *v.* 10; two letters alone remain of the missing clause, and they hardly offer an adequate basis for conjectural restoration.

*V.* 11 (metre 3 : 3) is an isolated line, possibly from a song of victory. Those who *bring glad tidings* are women, and the term recalls Is. 40<sup>9</sup>.

In the seventh section, *vv.* 12–13 (metre : 4 : 3), we seem to have an extract from a song of victory similar to Judg. 5. The poem must have been singularly vigorous and impressive. With the picture of the *beauty of the house dividing the spoil* we may compare the reflections ascribed to Sisera's mother in Judg. 5<sup>30</sup>. The first clause of *v.* 13 defies interpretation, though the word *ash-heaps* recalls Judg. 5<sup>16</sup>. The text may be hopelessly corrupt, and in any case a parallel verse-member is missing. It might have given a clue to the connexion, if any, with the latter part of the verse. The last line is generally interpreted as describing one item in a list of the spoil, an ornament in the shape of a *dove*, studded with *silver* and a peculiar greenish *gold*. Such ornaments might well have been worn by women, originally, perhaps, in connexion with the cult of Ishtar, and if the line really does belong to the same piece as *v.* 12, this may be the correct interpretation.

*V.* 14 (metre : 2 : 2 : 2), again, is an isolated line from a song of triumph. If the text be correct, the reference to *snow on Zalmon*, a mountain in the Shechem district (cp. Judg. 9<sup>48</sup>), would indicate that a definite historical event was commemorated in the poem from which this line was taken.

The ninth fragment, *vv.* 15–16 (metre : 2 : 2), is elusive and intriguing. If the text of *v.* 15 be correct, it appears to be an echo of a conflict for supremacy between various sacred sites. On the one hand it is claimed that Yahweh's true home is in *the mount of peaks, the mount of*

*Bashan*, which probably means a sanctuary on Hermon. But the champions of Zion retort, "*Why keep ye jealous watch?*" implying that all the world knows that Zion is *the mount where God loveth to dwell*, and that the inferior rival is keenly looking for some ground on which to make good a claim. If we had more of this poem, we might gain a very interesting light on one aspect of Israel's religious life.

Another single verse from a triumph-song appears in *v.* 17 (metre 3 : 2, 2 : 2). Again we think of Judg. 5, with its reference to *Sinai*. Here, however, the stress is on *the chariots of God*, i.e., the thunder-clouds. The Hebrew idiom emphasizes the multitude of them; *myriads* upon *myriads* is what the poet's form implies. The closing phrase of this line is curious; literally it seems to mean "thousands of repetition", i.e., "thousands repeated". The text, however, may be corrupt.

*V.* 18<sup>a-c</sup> (metre 4 : 3) is also an isolated line from a song of victory, best known from the quotation in Eph. 4<sup>8</sup>, where, however, St. Paul says "gave", not "took" gifts.

Two pieces in the collection attain to the length of six lines. The first of these is contained in *vv.* 18<sup>d</sup>-21 (metre: 18<sup>d</sup>-19, 3 : 2; 20-21, 2 : 2). Here again is a contrast between the wicked and the righteous, the *rebels* and those whose *burden* God *bear*eth. God *hath issues from death*, ways through which men may escape even when their doom seems inevitable. On the other side we have the *wicked*, whose *head* God *crushes* (again compare Judg. 5<sup>26</sup>). The *hair-decked pate* is an interesting expression, which may lead us to think of the wild desert tribesman, who let his hair grow as a cultural or religious practice. The custom is widely spread; it was found at Sparta in the fifth century B.C., and is a familiar element in the Nazirite. The "long locks streaming free" of Judg. 5<sup>2</sup> may refer to the same practice. A form of religious custom, which in Israel denoted sanctity to Yahweh, may well have been common among contemporary peoples as a token of consecration to their own gods. In that case, the enemy will be a foreign, probably a Bedawin, tribe or people.

*Vv.* 22-23 (metre: 2 : 3, 2 : 2, 2 : 2) come from a poem which promised victory over some enemies unnamed. The mention of *Bashan* as one of the places from which God will *restore*, suggests the border warfare of the ninth century B.C. between Israel and Damascus, while the *depths of the sea* may refer to raids made by Phœnicians and others, undertaken in order to supply the western slave-markets. The vengeance which promises that the Israelite shall *wash his foot in blood*, and that his *hounds* shall *drink* their *fill* of their *enemies'* blood, is an expression of feeling which we find elsewhere in the Psalter.

In *vv.* 24-27 (metre: 4 : 3; *v.* 24, 3 : 4) we are transported into Jerusalem on the occasion of some great festival. The *festal train* is

winding its way through the streets that lead up to the temple, led by *singers*, with *damsels* beating timbrels following them, and *minstrels* with their harps bringing up the rear. It is interesting to observe that the *assembly* includes both *Benjamin* and *Judah* on the one hand and *Zebulon* and *Naphtali* on the other. The inclusion of these two groups is sometimes supposed to indicate a combination of Judah and Galilee, or to suggest the two extremes of the land. They may be the remains of a much longer list, for the piece is obviously mutilated, or they may be a later insertion based on the special praise given to these two tribes in the Song of Deborah, Judg. 5<sup>14,16</sup>. No doubt the ideal cherished by the religious authorities was that of a completed nation once more worshipping as a single whole, and, short as it is, this fragment gives us a valuable glimpse of the actual ceremonial observed on some sacred day.

The next fragment, vv. 28–29 (metre 3 : 4), is clearly taken from one of those psalms which appeal to God on the basis of his great deeds in the past. His *strength* is personified as the servant whom he commissions. It is a little strange to find that *kings* are expected to *bring a gift from* the temple; possibly the preposition has been wrongly transmitted.

V. 30 (metre : 3 : 2, 3 : 2, 2 : 2) suggests a prayer for victory over the Egyptians, typified by the *beasts of the reed*—the crocodile and the hippopotamus. Some editors would even read “from Patros” for the doubtful form rendered as *effeminate* above. The luxury of the enemy, whoever it may have been, is emphasized by the fact that their very chariot-wheels are studded with silver.

The second six-line extract is preserved in vv. 31–34<sup>c</sup> (metre : 2 : 2, with 3 : 2 in vv. 33<sup>b</sup>–34), to which, perhaps the rest of v. 34 and v. 35 should be added. Here, once more, we have a hymn of praise, in which Yahweh’s world-wide supremacy is celebrated. Unfortunately we do not know who or what it is that may *come from Egypt*. The Hebrew word is obscure and difficult to assign to a known root, and the Greek translators simply guessed that it meant “messengers”—with, apparently, no philological justification. It seems to be corrupt beyond hope even of conjectural emendation. From *Kush* worship is demanded, and vv. 32–33 summon all *realms* to join the chorus of praise to a God who *rideth on the ancient heavens*. Universality could not have been more strikingly expressed; the same sky is spread over all nations, and Yahweh has dominated it since time began. Even now he *speaketh aloud*, and it is no wonder that all humanity should be summoned to attest his *strength*.

The collection ends with a little piece closely allied to the preceding, vv. 34<sup>b</sup>–35 (metre : 3 : 3), and probably attached to it because of the similarity between the two. Some of the terms are repeated; in both

we have mention of the *strength* of God, of the *heavens* (though the words used are different), and of the *people of Israel* to whom their *God giveth strength and might*.

The last word is the familiar doxology, *Blessed be God*.

### *Religious Teaching*

It is obviously impossible to give an account of the leading doctrines in such a medley as this; nearly every psalm-*motif* is echoed in one or other of its pieces.

### PSALM 69

THIS psalm presents us with a remarkable picture of one troubled in mind and body, who gives utterance to his conflicting and rapidly alternating emotions without any attempt at co-ordination of thoughts and ideas. Prayer passes into plaint as suddenly as the mention of the groundless hate of enemies is followed by confession of sin; the claim of suffering for God's sake alternates with prayer; then comes a complaint that he has no sympathizers among his neighbours; there follow terrible curses upon his enemies; then prayer once more; finally, recognition of God's care for the oppressed is followed by some concluding words of praise. These varying and unconnected outbursts witness graphically to the worried frame of mind of the psalmist; and he shows, indeed, that there was ample cause for his distress. Here is one involved in violent strife with those within his own surroundings; he suffers, too, from sickness; and, worst of all, he is haunted by the perception of sinfulness within himself, and his efforts to atone for this are mocked at; to this is added perplexity regarding his relationship to God; and here one cannot fail to notice the absence of those earnest affirmations of trust and faith in God which are so insistently uttered by other psalmists; not that these are really wanting, as his appeals to God show, but the whirl of worry seems to have unsettled his normal spiritual state.

The question as to the cause of the enmity whereby he is beset is a perplexing one; the psalmist himself throws no light upon it; presumably it was so obvious as to need no explanation. We have dealt with this subject in Vol. I, pp. 56 ff.; it will, therefore, not be necessary to say more about it here.

Of the date there are no certain indications; we are inclined to assign it to the Greek period, partly on account of what we believe to be the cause of the enmity against the psalmist and partly on account



- 25 (26). Let their habitation become  
desolate,  
26 (27). For °him° whom thou hast  
smitten they persecute,  
27 (28). Add iniquity to their iniquity,  
28 (29). Let them be blotted out of the  
book of the living,  
29 (30). But as for me, I am poor, and in  
pain,  
30 (31). I will praise the name of God with  
a song,  
31 (32). And it will please Yahweh better  
than an ox,  
32 (33). The oppressed ones ° will see ° it  
and rejoice;  
33 (34). For Yahweh hearkeneth unto the  
needy,  
34 (35). Let heaven and earth praise him,  
35 (36). For God will save Zion,  
That they may dwell there  
36 (37). And the seed of his servants shall  
inherit it,  
that there be no dweller in their tents;  
° and aggravate the pain of him whom  
thou hast pierced °.  
and let them not ° see ° thy righteous-  
ness;  
and let them not be inscribed with the  
righteous.  
and let thy salvation, O God, ° protect  
me °.  
and I will magnify him with thanks-  
giving,  
a bullock with horns and hoofs.  
ye that seek God may your heart be  
quickenened;  
and despiseth not ° his godly ones °;  
the seas and all that moveth therein;  
and he will build the cities of Judah,  
and take it in possession;  
and they that love his name shall  
inhabit it.

## Text-critical Notes

4. Read, with Gunkel and others, and a number of MSS., מַצְמִתִּי (cp. Isa. 47<sup>2</sup> lit. "veil" which covers the locks) for מַצְמִירִי, "my destroyers". 6. Om. אֲדֹנָי, "my Lord", for the rhythm's sake. 10. Read, cp. GS, וְאֶמְקָה for וְאֶבְכֶּה, "and I wept". 11. Lit. "a proverb". 13. Om. יְהוָה for the rhythm's sake. 14. Om. אֶפְצֶלָה, "let me be delivered", which overloads the half-line, and read, with Gunkel, נִשְׁאַנִּי for מִשְׁנֵאִי, "from them that hate me". 15. Lit. "well". 19. Om. וְכִלְמִירִי, "and my dishonour" for the rhythm's sake; and בְּנֶדֶךְ for בְּנֶדֶךָ, "before thee". 20. Om. וְאֶנִּישָׁן, "I am sore sick", for the rhythm's sake. Read, with the Versions, לִנְדָּה for לִנְדָּה, "to pity". 21. See exeget. note. 22. Read, with T, וְשָׁלוֹמִים for וְשָׁלוֹמִים, "and to them that are in peace". 26. Read, with the Versions, אַתָּה for אַתָּה, "thou". Lit. "and unto the pain of him whom thou hast pierced they add", reading הִלְלָהֶם for the plur.; and, with GS, וְיִסְפְּרוּ for וְיִסְפְּרוּ, "they tell". 27. Read, with several MSS. and G, יִרְאוּ for יִבְאוּ, "come". 29. Lit. "set me on high". 32. Read, with some MSS. and G, יִרְאוּ for יִרְאוּ, "they have seen". 33. Read וְיִסְפְּרוּ for וְיִסְפְּרוּ, "his prisoners".

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 17.

1-3. A vein almost of impatience seems to be discernible in these opening verses. In psalms of this type it will be seen that the first verse is invariably a parallelism, both members of the verse making mention of God, or of some divine attribute. Here the psalmist says simply *Save me, O God*, and then immediately begins his tale of woes. *Waters, mire, and flood* are all metaphors for dangers and troubles (cp. Pss. 32<sup>6</sup>, 40<sup>2</sup>). There seems to be no relief from them; he has cried to God until he is *weary* of doing so, his very *throat is parched*, and he is tired of *waiting for his God*. This is all very human and natural; it is not meant irreverently; the psalmist's frankness demands all sympathy; and it is not as though his outspokenness betrayed any real lack of faith in God; he is simply irritated by the endless annoyance which he has been suffering from so many enemies. A little overstated, no doubt, but (4)

they must have been many in number to be compared to the *hairs of his head*; and their false accusations made things worse. Incidentally, it should be noticed that one whose enemies were so numerous must have occupied a position of some importance; the assumption is, therefore, justified that he was one of the leaders, if not *the* leader, of the orthodox party.

The quite admirable sincerity and straightforwardness of our psalmist is then further illustrated; his conscience tells him that he has not been free from sin, and this he frankly acknowledges: 5. *Thou, O God, knowest my foolishness, and mine offences are not hid from thee*; he does not specify, but following upon the frame of mind exhibited by what he has said in the preceding verses, it may well be that he is thinking of what those offences were. It has been remarked that there are reasons for believing that the psalmist stood in the position of a leader; this is certainly borne out by what is now said: (6) those who have been inspired by his teaching, *i.e.*, his followers, are in danger of having to suffer for it; so the word of prayer is uttered that those who *through me might be put to shame or brought to dishonour*, may be spared this suffering; (7, 8) for it was solely for God's sake that he was glad to *bear reproach and shame*.

9. What had occasioned the immediate animosity of many who were otherwise in close touch with him seems to have been that the psalmist had forcibly prevented some unseemly proceedings in the temple, *thine house*; this, at any rate, was how the verse was understood in the early Church (John 2<sup>17</sup>). He gives us some insight into his forceful character when he says that *the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*; but like many another reformer he had to suffer for it, the result being that those who had been guilty of this irreverence resented his interference, and vented their wrath on him: *the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen on me*. 10-12. A very different thought now arises in the psalmist's mind; doubtless, in repentance for wrongdoing, already recalled, he had *humbled his soul with fasting*, and put on *sackcloth*, marks of repentance as well as mourning (1 Kgs. 21<sup>27</sup>, Joel 2<sup>12</sup>); but this had only called forth *mockery* and gibes on the part of those who sat drinking in the public place, *in the gate* (cp. Lam. 3<sup>14</sup>). 13-17. And now the psalmist turns again to prayer; the passage is one of intense feeling, and witnesses to an earnest trust in God, the more striking because of its contrast to the transient impatience exhibited in the opening verses. 18-20. The trouble he is in causes him to return to the subject of his enemies, from whom he prays to be delivered: *Draw nigh unto my soul, redeem it; because of mine enemies ransom me*; the strong expressions used show the powerful position of his enemies; God alone can help him; he looks in vain for *pity* or *comfort* from man. 21. The particularly vindictive action of his enemies is described in



metaphorical language ; he says *they put poison in his food* ; the word used here for “ food ” (*barûth*) is a technical one, and means food that was brought by friendly neighbours to one who was mourning for the death of a relative, by way of offering him some mark of sympathy and comfort (the word occurs in 2 Sam. 12<sup>17</sup>, Jer. 16<sup>7</sup> and elsewhere) ; so the psalmist assumes here the rôle of a mourner to whom this food is brought, but it has had poison put into it ! The metaphor is an extraordinary one and is used in order to place on record the outrageously mean conduct of his enemies. Then he says further, again speaking metaphorically, that when he was thirsty *they gave him vinegar to drink* ; this means that they put vinegar into his drink, so that, so far from assuaging his thirst, it only made him more thirsty ! That our psalmist retaliated on his enemies was natural enough ; but the series of curses—that is the force of the utterances which follow (22–28) make a painful impression. It will not be necessary to dwell upon them, though a few phrases call for some words of explanation. In 22 it is said : *Let their table be a snare to them* ; in its original sense the word for “ table ” (*šulhan*) meant the mat, whether of plaited straw or of leather, which was spread out on the ground, and on which the food for a meal was placed. The word we have rendered “ sacrificial feasts ” is strictly correct, the *šelem*, or “ peace-offering ”, was one of the most common kinds of sacrifice ; part of the victim came upon the altar, the rest was eaten by the worshippers at a sacrificial feast. The point of the psalmist’s words, therefore, is that as his enemies had poisoned his food, so their intended crime was to recoil on themselves ; the mat on which their food was placed was to be, as it were, a hidden gin, or “ snare ” ; their joyous sacrificial feast was to be a bait-laying trap. It was a kind of curse-formula, the utterance of which, it was believed, would take effect. And this effect is described in the next verse : *May their eyes be darkened*, the first sign that poison is having its effect ; this is followed by the trembling of the limbs, *loins*, as the psalmist expresses it. Then, lest this should not prove to be sufficiently effective, the psalmist goes so far as to pray that God will *pour out* on them his *indignation*, and let *the burning of his wrath overtake them* : so that *their habitation may become desolate*, and that *there be no dweller in their tents* ; in other words, that both they and their families may be exterminated. And this because they had *persecuted* him whom God had *smitten*, as though the divine punishment for his sin—he does not specify what it is, but see v. 5—were not sufficient. Particularly distasteful are the words which follow : *Add iniquity to their iniquity* ; the horrible desire is here expressed that God would cause them to sin so as to justify the divine chastisement of them ; *and let them not see thy righteousness* means, “ and let them not be justified by thee ” ; *righteousness* is used in the forensic sense of declaration of guiltlessness.

And finally there is the cruel petition: *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living*, in reference to the belief that God kept a register of the living; if the names no longer appeared there it meant that they would die (cp. Exod. 32<sup>32</sup>, Isa. 4<sup>3</sup>). These terrible imprecations, and similar utterances occur in some other psalms, sound painful to our ears; but it must be remembered that they were regarded as a legitimate means of inflicting retribution. Very different are the beautiful words which form the conclusion of the psalm, 29-36. In his sanctified humility the psalmist feels keenly that he is a pitiable object (that seems to be the force of the Hebrew word here), stricken by sickness: *But as for me, I am poor, and in pain*: nevertheless, he knows that God's help (*salvation*) will *protect* him, a word meaning lit. will "set him on high" (cp. Ps. 20<sup>1</sup>), out of the reach of danger. Then (30) he *will praise the name of God with a song*, and thank him. Some very significant words follow (31) to the effect that this will be more pleasing to God than the offering of *an ox, a bullock with horns and hoofs*—the contemptuous strain is apparent; here we have one of the few passages in the *Psalms* in which sacrifices are belittled (see also Pss. 40<sup>6</sup>, 50<sup>8-14</sup>, 51<sup>16, 17</sup>); it may well be that this attitude of the psalmist contributed to the feelings of enmity displayed against him. But however this may be, he is convinced that this spiritual conception of worship will be shared by others, and it will give them joy and encourage them: *the oppressed ones will see it, and rejoice; ye that seek God may your heart be quickened*; they will recognize that Yahweh gives heed to them and does not despise *his godly ones (Ḥasidim)*; this last is an emendation, which is, however, justified; for the text reads "his prisoners" (see text-crit. note), which is not an appropriate parallel to "the needy" (*'Ebyonim*), whereas *Ḥasidim* and *'Ebyonim* often occur together as parallels; moreover, there is much in the psalm which makes it clear that the psalmist was himself a *Ḥasid*, and a leader of the "godly ones" (on the whole subject see Vol. I, pp. 56 f.). In gratitude he cries: *Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that moveth therein*.

As to the concluding verses, 35, 36, many commentators question whether they really belong to the psalm in its original form; and it must be conceded that they certainly seem out of connexion with all that has preceded. They contain an eschatological picture, and express the conviction that *God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah*, and that all the *servants* of God and those *that love his name* will finally *inherit* the land and abide therein.

### *Religious Teaching*

This has been necessarily dealt with in the introductory section and in the exegetical notes.

PSALM 70: *see* PSALM 40<sup>13-17</sup>

## PSALM 71

A PSALM written by one, already advanced in years, who has been the victim of much ill-treatment by unscrupulous enemies; the cause of their resentment is not indicated; what, however, is made clear is that the psalmist is one who has ever been faithful to his God, while his enemies are wicked and godless.

The contention that the psalmist represents, and speaks on behalf of, his people, cannot be sustained; indeed, it is difficult to see what could have prompted the idea. Here is one who has trusted in God from his youth, and who from his "mother's womb" has looked to Yahweh for help and protection; in gratitude he sings his hymns of praise; and offers up prayer for the continuance of God's mercy in his old age. This personal note runs through the whole psalm. To interpret all this in a collective sense is to put a forced and unnatural meaning on many passages, and to misunderstand the entire spirit and purpose of the psalm.

Considered from the point of view of composition the psalm is somewhat lacking; the repetitions and absence of logical sequence in subject-matter make it of less excellence than most of the psalms. But for its deep piety and religious spirit it stands among some of the most beautiful productions in the Psalter (see further, the concluding section).

Considerable use has been made of other psalms, sometimes verbally quoted; at other times an inexact quotation is made, showing it to have been made from memory. Towards the end of the psalm there is some corruption in the text, due, in some cases at any rate, to careless copying.

The psalm is certainly post-exilic, on account of the use made of other post-exilic psalms (*e.g.*, Ps. 31); but there is nothing to indicate a more exact date.

The metre is irregular, partly due, in all probability to working-over by later scribes.

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. In thee, Yahweh, do I trust,                      | let me never be put to shame;   |
| 2. In thy righteousness deliver me and<br>rescue me, | bow down thine ear unto me;     |
| Yea, save me, 3. and be unto me,                     | a Rock of safety °              |
| ° A house of defence °, to save me,                  | for my Rock ° art thou.         |
| 4. My God, rescue me<br>from the hand of the wicked, |                                 |
| From the clutch of the unrighteous and violent.      |                                 |
| 5. For thou art my hope, O Lord,                     | my trust from my youth, Yahweh; |

6. On thee have I upheld myself from the womb,  
From the bowels of my mother  
thou art ° my strength °,  
Of thee is my praise continually.
7. A wonderment to many am I, but thou art my strong refuge ;  
8. My mouth is full of thy praise, of thine honour all day.  
9. Cast me not away in the time of mine old-age, when my strength faileth me forsake me not ;
10. For mine enemies speak against me, they that watch for my soul conspire,  
11. " God hath forsaken him, Pursue him and take him, For there is none that delivereth ! "
12. O God, be not far from me, my God, haste thee to help me ;  
13. Let them be ashamed ° that attack my soul, let them be covered with reproach and disgrace °.
14. But as for me, I will continually and add to all thy praise ;  
15. My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness, all the day of thy salvation,  
Yea, the numbers thereof I know not ;
16. ° I will declare the mighty deeds ° of Yahweh, I will make mention of thy righteousness, thine alone.  
17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and till now do I declare thy wondrous-works,  
18. Yea, even to old-age and grey hairs ; O God, forsake me not,  
So that I may declare thy ° deliverance ° ° and thy might to a generation to come °.
19. Thy righteousness, O God, is ° everlasting °, thou that doest great deeds ;  
O God, who is like unto thee !
20. ° Thou didst show me many troubles °, but thou didst keep me alive, Yea, from the depths of the earth, thou didst bring me up again,  
21. Thou didst increase my greatness, ° and thou didst bring back ° my comfort.
22. I also will thank thee with the harp for thy faithfulness, O my God, I will praise thee with the lyre,  
O holy one of Israel ;
23. My lips shall shout for joy °, For thou hast redeemed my soul.  
24. Yea, my tongue all the day shall discourse of thy righteousness ;  
For they are ashamed and confounded  
That seek my hurt.

### Text-critical Notes

3. Read, with many MSS. and the Versions, *מְעוֹן* for *מְעוֹן*, "dwelling-place" (see Ps. 31<sup>23</sup>). Read, with Ps. 31<sup>24</sup>, *בְּיָדֶיךָ מְצִדּוֹר* for *בְּיָדֶיךָ מְצִדּוֹר*, "to come continually thou hast commanded". 6. Read, cp. G, *עוֹזִי* for *נֹזֵזִי*, "he that bringeth me over". 10. Om. *יַחְדָּי* "together", it is unnecessary and overloads the half-line. 11. Om. *לְאִמֹר*, "saying", for the same reasons as the foregoing. 13. Om. *יִכְלֵי*, "let them be consumed", which overloads the half-line. Om. *מִבְּקָשִׁי רָצָהּ*, "that seek my hurt", which overloads the half-line. 14. Read, with Gunkel, *אֶחָל* for *אֶחָל*, "I will hope", as being a better parallel. 16. Read, with Cheyne, *אֶבֱיָא בְּגִבּוֹרֹת* for *אֶבֱיָא בְּגִבּוֹרֹת*, "I will come with mighty deeds"; and om. *אֶדְבִּי* for the rhythm's sake. 18. Lit. "arm" used figuratively. Read, with G, *לְקַלִּי*. Read *וְגִדְדוֹר יָבוֹא בְּבִרְחָה* for *וְגִדְדוֹר יָבוֹא בְּבִרְחָה*, "unto the height". 20. Om. *אֲשֶׁר*, "who" and *וְרָעוֹת* "and evils", which overload the half-line. 21. Read, with the Versions, *וְהִסָּב* for *וְהִסָּב*, "and turn again". 23. Om. *כִּי אֶזְמְרָה לָּךְ*, "for I sing praise unto thee", which overloads the half-line, and om. *אֲשֶׁר*, "which".

1-3. This opening prayer, coupled with a resolute faith in Yahweh, is almost verbally identical with Ps. 31<sup>1, 2</sup>. The prayer is offered with the greater assurance in that the psalmist knows that he is one of godly life, *In thee do I trust*, so that there is an implied sense of innocence in the words, *In thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me*, because a righteous God helps those who are true to him. The firm faith of the psalmist in his God as one upon whom he can rely, is expressed by the three phrases: *a Rock of safety* (cp. Pss. 18<sup>31</sup>, 62<sup>7</sup>), *a house of defence* (as in Ps. 31<sup>2</sup>, cp. Isa. 33<sup>16</sup>), *my Rock* (a different word in Hebrew) *art thou* (cp. Pss. 18<sup>2</sup>, 42<sup>9</sup>). The cause which has called forth this prayer is (4) that he may be rescued *from the hand of the wicked, from the clutch* (lit. "palm", but see Ezek. 29<sup>7</sup>, "grasp with the palm") *of the unrighteous and violent*. He is, thus, an object of hatred, but he does not say why; although he does not apply the title to himself, he was, no doubt, a *Ḥasid*, in which case the cause of enmity would be explained (see Vol. I, pp. 56 f.). There is good reason why he should be convinced that God would *rescue* him, for (5, 6) his *hope* and *trust* had been in *Yahweh* from his *youth*; nay, more: *On thee have I upheld myself from the womb*; the thought is that of one clinging on to something; so had he supported himself on Yahweh. This verse is clearly based on Ps. 22<sup>9, 10</sup>; but similar words occur also in Isa. 46<sup>3</sup>, where the reference is to the nation; and this has been pointed to in support of the collective interpretation of the psalm; but the psalmist has just said that in Yahweh has been his trust *from* his *youth*, which could not be said of the nation; the prophetic passage makes no mention of the nation's youth.

All through his life the psalmist has had the experience of the blessedness of a real trust in God. Since he thus looks back upon his early years, he was evidently now an old man. Then, turning again to the present, (7) he says that he is *a wonderment to many*; we have rendered the Hebrew word by "wonderment" rather than by the ordinary word "wonder", which is generally used in a good sense, whereas here the meaning is rather that of a contemptible spectacle causing astonishment; the reference is probably to some malady from which the psalmist was suffering. But he disregards the surprised contempt of his enemies because God is his *strong refuge*; therefore (8) his *mouth is full of praise and honour* to God. Then (9-13) the thought of his old-age recurs, and he prays: *Cast me not away in the time of mine old-age . . .*: and he refers again to his *enemies*, this time with a little more detail. They are slanderers, they *speak against* him, and *watch* for any opportunity to harm him. In reference, it may be surmised, to his sickness, they maintain that *God hath forsaken him*, so that they can with impunity pursue him and take him. But the psalmist knows that God will deliver him from their evil machinations, and prays for his help, and that those *that attack his soul* may be *ashamed*,

and *covered with reproach and disgrace*. The use of the word *soul* (also in *v.* 10) should be noted ; it is used almost invariably in reference to an individual, thus showing again, incidentally, the untenability of the view that the psalmist represents the community. 14-16. That his prayer had not been in vain the psalmist now shows by his grateful recognition of God's goodness to him, for which he rejoices and praises him. So many have been these acts of lovingkindness, showing forth the divine *righteousness*, that they are simply innumerable, *the numbers thereof I know not* ; therefore he will declare those *mighty deeds*, and *make mention* of that *righteousness*, emphasized by the expression *thine alone*. 17-19. His faithfulness to God, and his recognition of divine guidance *from his youth*, are then beautifully expressed in the words : *O God, thou hast taught me from my youth* ; and he can claim that he has declared the *wondrous works* of God all through his life, even *till now*, to *old-age and grey hairs*, to which he again refers. This he will continue to do *to all the generation*, i.e., to all those living around him, who in their turn will proclaim it *to a generation to come* ; for God's *righteousness* is *everlasting*, and he ever does *great deeds*. With over-full heart the psalmist cries : *O God, who is like unto thee !* 20, 21. Then, once more, reminiscences of the past come into the psalmist's mind : *Thou didst show me many troubles*, but God preserved him ; he was even near to death, but the divine mercy saved him : *Yea, from the depths of the earth thou didst bring me up again* ; and prosperity and comfort were his lot once more. 22-24. The psalm closes with a triumphant hymn of praise and gratitude.

### *Religious Teaching*

So far as devout expressions of faith in God are concerned, this psalm has much in common with many others. But what is particularly noteworthy, and almost unique in the Psalter, is the beautiful picture of one, now well advanced in years, who can look back upon his past life in the happy conviction that he has done his duty to God ; and that, in spite of troubles, God has been with him and upheld him.

### PSALM 72

THIS psalm is differently interpreted by commentators. A number of passages quite obviously refer to an earthly king, while others express thoughts which would seem to apply to the Messianic king. Against the view that the psalm is to be Messianically interpreted is the fact that if the psalmist had had the Messianic king in mind he would not, with his marked familiarity with the prophetic teaching regarding the

Messiah, have omitted the most striking attributes of that wonderful figure as set forth in such passages, among others, as Isa. 9<sup>6, 7</sup>, 11<sup>1-5</sup>, 32<sup>1-5</sup>. The psalm, we submit, was composed in honour of a king on his accession to the throne; the psalmist, in characteristically Oriental style, idealizes the royal person whom he is honouring, and gives utterance to thoughts which to modern Western ears sound exaggerated; statements are made and wishes are expressed, which give an impression of unreality; but familiarity with Eastern modes of expression, so often illustrated in the Old Testament, will show them to be perfectly genuine.

The psalm is an exceedingly interesting illustration of the way in which a court-poet of those days welcomed the new king on his accession to the throne; and the definitely religious note struck in the opening verses is full of significance; as God's representative among his people, righteousness is to be the guiding principle of his reign.

The psalm was never intended for liturgical worship, and was never used in the worship of the Synagogue. Its inclusion in the Psalter was doubtless due to the religious conception of the king's duties. That the psalm is pre-exilic is obvious on the face of it; a post-exilic psalm would involve a Messianic interpretation, which, as we have seen, is untenable.

The text of vv. 16, 17 has undergone some corruption.

The metre is irregular.

*Solomon's.*

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 1.  | O God, ° thy justice °<br>give to the king,<br>And thy righteousness to the king's son,        |  |
| 2.  | ° That he may judge ° thy people with<br>righteousness,  | and thy poor with justice.   |
| 3.  | May the mountains bring peace °,   | and the hills ° righteousness °;   |
| 4.  | May he vindicate the poor among the<br>people,   | and help the sons of the needy,  |
|     | And tread down the oppressor,  |  |
| 5.  | While the sun ° endureth °,  | and the moon, to all generations;  |
| 6.  | May it descend like rain on the land,  | like showers that ° water ° the earth,   |
| 7.  | May ° righteousness ° flourish in his<br>days,   | and abundance of peace till the moon<br>be no more.  |
| 8.  | May he rule from sea to sea,   | and from the river to the ends of the<br>earth;  |
| 9.  | May ° his foes ° bow down before him,  | and his enemies lick the dust;   |
| 10. | May the kings of Tarshish, and the isles,<br>The kings of Sheba and Seba                       | bring gifts,<br>offer presents;  |
| 11. | May all kings bow down to him,   | all nations serve him.   |
| 12. | For he delivereth the needy ° from the<br>rich °,  | and the oppressed that hath no helper;   |
| 13. | He hath pity on the weak and poor,   | and the souls of the poor he helpeth;  |
| 14. | He redeemeth their soul from<br>oppression °,  | and precious is their blood in his eyes;   |
| 15. | May he live, and may there be  | given him gold of Sheba;   |
|     | May they pray for him continually,   | may they bless him at all times.   |
| 16. | May there be ° abundance ° of corn in<br>the land,<br>Like Lebanon may its yield ° flourish °, | may it ° grow thick ° on the tops of the<br>mountains;<br>and ° its sheaves ° like herbs on the<br>land. |
| 17. | May his name last for ever,<br>And may all nations with him be<br>prospered,                   | as long as the sun ° standeth firm °,<br>and ° all the tribes of the earth ° call<br>him blessed.        |

18. Blessed be Yahweh<sup>o</sup>  
the God of Israel,  
Who alone doeth wondrous things;  
19. And blessed be his glorious name for ever,  
And may all the earth be full of his glory.  
Amen and Amen.  
20. ° [The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.]°

## Text-critical Notes

1. Read, with the Versions, the sing. 2. Read, cp. G, יָדִין for יִדְּן, "he shall judge". 3. Om. לָעַם, "to the people" (gloss). Read, with G, צִדְקָה, omitting בְּ, "with". 5. Read, with G, וְיִאֲרִיךְ, lit. "while it continueth", for יִרְאֶה, "may they fear thee". 6. Read יִזְרִיפֵי, or, with the Versions, זֶרֶפֶי. 7. Read, with many MSS. and the Versions, צַדִּיק for צָדִיק, "righteous (man)". 9. Read צָרִי for צָרִים, "jackals". 12. Read, with the Versions מְשֹׁלֵעַ, lit. "from the noble (in rank)" for מְשֹׁלֵעַ, "when he crieth". 14. Om., for the rhythm's sake, וּמִחַיִּים, "and from violence". 16. Read, with Gressmann, פָּסַח, for the otherwise unknown פָּסַח. Read, with Gressmann, יַעֲשֶׂר, lit. "may it be rich", for יִרְעַשׁ, "may it shake". Read יִצְיִץ for יִצְיִצֵּי, "and they shall flourish". Read, with Gunkel, וְיִמְיִד (coll.) for מִעִיר, "from the city". 17. Read יִפְּן (cp. G διαμενέ) for יִפְּן, "it shall bud". Om. שְׁמוֹ. Add, with G, כְּלִמְשָׁחוֹת, "praises". 18. Om., with some MSS. and GS, אֱלֹהִים, "God". 20. Omitted by a number of MSS. G reads תְּהַלֵּל, "praises", for תְּפִלֹּת, "prayers".

The title assigning the psalm to Solomon was doubtless suggested by the words of *v.* 10 (cp. 1 Kgs. 10<sup>1 ff.</sup>).

1, 2. As already pointed out, this psalm was composed in honour of the king, in all probability on his accession to the throne. With a true sense of what is primarily demanded in a king, the psalmist begins with a prayer to God on behalf of the new ruler: *O God, thy justice give to the king*; he says *thy justice* both because divine justice is unalterable, and because God is the source of all justice; with this is inseparably connected *thy righteousness*, also of divine origin, and unfailing. The new ruler is spoken of as *the king's son*, which would seem to imply that he was yet young. With divine guidance he will be able to *judge thy people with righteousness*; significant is *thy people* and *thy poor* (lit. "afflicted"), for all the people belong to Yahweh, the king rules on trust; the poor are especially God's own, a thought often occurring in the prophetic writings (e.g., Isa. 3<sup>14, 15</sup>, 14<sup>32</sup>, 32<sup>7</sup>). These verses show the untenability of a Messianic interpretation of the psalm. 3-11. A series of good wishes for the new king follows. Thus, the psalmist says, re-echoing Isa. 52<sup>7</sup>, *May the mountains bring peace, and the hills righteousness* (cp. Isa. 55<sup>12</sup>); the point of these words is that it is upon the mountains around Jerusalem that messengers appear (Isa. 52<sup>7</sup>); it is a wish, already expressed in the prayer, that the king *may vindicate the poor among the people*, i.e., justify them when wrongly accused, and thus shield them from *the oppressor*, whom he will *tread down*. It is a poetical exaggeration when the psalmist adds: *While the sun endureth . . .* An expressive picture follows: *May it, i.e., righteousness*, as the next verse



shows, *descend like rain on the land, like showers that water* (see text-crit. note) *the earth*. The word for "land" is a very rare one, it occurs elsewhere only in Deut. 18<sup>4</sup>, Job 31<sup>20</sup>, Am. 7<sup>1</sup>, and means land on which the grass has fully grown and is ready for mowing. He continues: *May righteousness flourish in his days*. Then (8-11) wishes of another kind are expressed; they touch upon the political sphere. *May he rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*, quoted verbally from Zech. 9<sup>10</sup>, where they are Messianically interpreted; the words meant, for one who was living in Palestine, from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, east to west, and from the Euphrates to some indefinite part beyond Egypt, north to south (strictly north-east to south-west).

9. In accordance with this wide-spread power the further wish is expressed that *his foes may bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust*, an Oriental figure of speech to express deep humility before a conqueror; the expression occurs in Isa. 49<sup>23</sup>, Mic. 7<sup>17</sup>, but with no reference to the Messianic king, it is before the people of Israel that the nations humble themselves. All the kings of the earth are to be subject to this king, so the psalmist's wish runs next; they are to bring gifts and tribute to him. *Tarshish* is usually identified with the Phœnician colony of Tartessus, in Spain; *the isles* refer presumably to those in the Mediterranean sea, but coastlands are also included (cp. Isa. 41<sup>1, 5</sup>); *Sheba* was in southern Arabia (cp. Isa. 60<sup>6</sup>, Ezek. 27<sup>21, 22</sup>), and *Seba*, or *Saba*, was "a royal city of Ethiopia, which Cambyses afterwards named *Meroe*, after the name of his own sister" (Josephus, *Antiq.* II. 249). These *kings* are all to *bow down to him*, and the *nations* to *serve him* (cp. Isa. 60<sup>5 ff.</sup>, 11<sup>ff.</sup>, not in reference to the Messianic king). All this is to be the reward of the king, for the psalmist now (12-14) takes for granted that the prayer he had offered on behalf of the king (*vv.* 1, 2) will be answered: *For he delivereth the needy from the rich* (see text-crit. note) *and the oppressed that hath no helper . . .* Therefore (15) the poor will be able to live. *May he live* is collective, and the king will, of his bounty, give him of the *gold of Sheba*; so the psalmist hopes. Therefore they will *pray for him continually* and *bless him at all times*. Here, again, it will be seen that the thought of the Messianic king was not in the psalmist's mind. But the greatest need of the poor was that they might have their daily bread, therefore the psalmist, in high-flown Oriental style, expresses the wish that not only *may there be abundance of corn in the land*, but that it may even *grow thick on the tops of the mountains*; and he adds: *Like Lebanon may its yield flourish, and its sheaves like herbs on the land*: it is uncertain whether the reference here is to the luxurious growth of trees on mount Lebanon, or whether *Libanus* is meant, as in Hos. 14<sup>5, 6 (6, 7)</sup>, Cant. 4<sup>11</sup>, the tree, vigorous and sweet-smelling, from the leaves of which incense was made, hence the Hebrew word, *l'bónah*, "frankincense"; in any case, like the parallel clause, the language is

hyperbolic, but quite in accordance with what would be expected from a court-poet on such an auspicious occasion. A reign during which such prosperity was looked for, would inspire the expectation that the king's *name* would *last for ever*, and *stand firm as long as the sun*; another Oriental mode of expression, it does not occur elsewhere, though for a somewhat similar thought cp. Ps. 89<sup>36</sup>. The beneficent reign of this king will be such, according to the psalmist's idealistic wishes, that other nations will partake of his prosperity, *and all the tribes of the earth will call him blessed*. 18, 19. This doxology is not part of the psalm; it was, no doubt, added when the Psalter was divided into five books (to correspond with the "Five Books of Moses"); each book concludes with a similar doxology (41<sup>13</sup>, 89<sup>52</sup>, 106<sup>48</sup>), the place of which is taken by Ps. 150 as the concluding doxology to the whole Psalter. 20 is omitted by a number of MSS.

### *Religious Teaching*

In a psalm so taken up with good wishes for the new king it is not surprising that the religious element is not prominent. But it is significant that the psalm opens with a prayer which, though short, asks for what is of fundamental importance. For a ruler to be guided by just dealing and righteous acts, recognizing that they are of divine inspiration, is a blessing to his country of inestimable value. This conception of kingship was ingrained in ancient Israel; an ideal for all time.

### PSALM 73

LIKE Pss. 37 and 49, Ps. 73 deals with the problem, first formally stated by Habakkuk and still unsolved, of the principles on which rewards and punishments are distributed among men. The problem could arise only on the basis of such teaching as that given by the eighth-century prophets and their successors—that the world is governed by righteous and infallible Omnipotence. Given that doctrine, however, the further question becomes inevitable, for the facts of life are by no means in harmony with its apparent corollaries. It does not follow that upright conduct always produces happiness, or that the sinner always meets with obvious disaster. The classical discussion of the problem is found in the book of *Job*; it is raised more than once in the prophets, and is the theme of these psalms. The three, however, handle the matter in different ways. In Ps. 37 the law of mechanical retribution is stated in a somewhat crude form, reminding us of the position taken by Job's friends: the adversity of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked are alike temporary and evanescent. The writer of Ps. 49,

again, has a totally different line of approach, and dwells on the unreality of material prosperity in view of the common fate of all humanity. He has developed a contempt for wealth which suggests the attitude of the Stoic or even of the Cynic. Ps. 73 goes deeper, and seeks an answer to the rankling question through the mystic experience of the thoughtful saint.

In a sense, then, the psalm has a didactic purpose, and Gunkel's inclusion of it among the "Wisdom Psalms" has some justification, though even in that group it is unique. Like so much of the Wisdom literature, it comes from a comparatively late date. Both the teaching of the psalm and its language point to a time well on in the post-exilic period. There are numerous archaisms, apparently intentional, with unconscious lapses into late form and idiom.

The text has been fairly well preserved, though there are one or two difficult passages. The worst case is *v.* 10, which, in any case, badly interrupts the connexion between *vv.* 9 and 11, and would follow well after *v.* 5. Further, Kittel is surely justified in placing *v.* 21 between *vv.* 16 and 17.

The metre is mainly 3 : 3, with 2 : 2 : 2 in *vv.* 12 and 18, and anacrusis in *vv.* 2, 11, and 28. In three instances (*v.* 21, twice, and *v.* 17), a word heavily charged with meaning must receive two stresses.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Surely ° God ° is good ° to the up-<br>right °,                  | Elohim to the pure in heart !                            |
| 2. But as for me !<br>My feet had all but ° slipped °,              | a hair's breadth and my steps ° were<br>gone °.          |
| 3. For I grew hotly indignant at the<br>° wealth of the boasters °, | as I gazed on the prosperity of the<br>wicked.           |
| 4. For no bonds ° have they,  | faultless ° and fat is their belly.                      |
| 5. They are not in the trouble of mortals,                          | they are not plagued with mankind.                       |
| 10. ° Thus are they sated with bread °,                             | ° and for water they have no thirst °.                   |
| 6. Therefore is pride their necklet,                                | garb of violence wraps them about.                       |
| 7. From fatness comes forth their<br>° iniquity °,                  | the fair schemes of their heart pass all<br>bounds.      |
| 8. They mock, and speak ill,  | ° arrogantly ° they speak in disdain.                    |
| 9. They have set their mouth against<br>heaven,                     | and their tongue roves through earth.                    |
| 11. And they say—<br>How does God know ?                            | and is there knowledge in the highest ?                  |
| 12. Behold ! these are the wicked,<br>and in endless calm           | they increase their wealth.                              |
| 13. Surely in vain have I kept my heart<br>pure,                    | and washed my hands in innocence !                       |
| 14. And I have been smitten all day,                                | ° and chastening was mine ° every<br>morning.            |
| 15. Had I thought : I would ° thus °<br>tell my tale,               | I were traitor ° to the generation ° of thy<br>children. |
| 16. So I quested to know this,                                      | a trouble was it in mine eyes.                           |
| 21. For my heart grew ever more bitter,                             | and in my reins was a gnawing pain.                      |
| 22. And I was an ignorant brute,                                    | a very beast I became before thee.                       |
| 17. Till I entered God's holy places,                               | understood their latter end.                             |
| 18. Surely in slippery places                                       |  |
| thou settest them,  |  |
| in beguiling thou bringest them down.                               |  |

19. How are they a waste in a moment,  
 20. As a dream when one waketh, O Lord,  
 23. Nevertheless—I am ever with thee,  
 24. With thy counsel thou ledest me  
     <sup>o</sup> in the way <sup>o</sup>;  
 25. Whom have I in the heavens ?  
 26. My flesh and my heart cease to be,  
 27. For lo ! they perish that are far from  
     thee,  
 28. My goodness is nearness to God,
- through terrors are finished and ended !  
 when thou rousest thee thou wilt  
     despise their form.  
 thou holdest my right hand.  
 and afterwards wilt gloriously take me.  
 in the earth I have no delight save in  
     thee ;  
 but my portion is God for ever.  
 all that go a-whoring from thee thou  
     destroyest.  
 I have made in the Lord <sup>o</sup> <sup>o</sup> my  
     refuge.

## Text-critical Notes

1. Read, with Graetz, לְשֵׁר אֵל for "unto Israel". 2. Read, with Q<sup>r</sup>e G, קָטִי, for *K<sup>t</sup>hib* קָטִי. 3. Read, with Budde, בְּדוֹלִים דוֹלִיִּים for "at the boasters". 4. Read with Ewald, לָמוֹתָם for "at their death". 10. Read, mainly with Lagarde (cited by Gunkel), הָאֵם יִשְׁבְּעוּ לָהֶם for "his people shall return hither". Read with G, וְיִצְחָאוּ for "and waters of the full are wrung out". 7. Read, with G, עֵינֵיכֶם for "their eye". 8. Read, with Graetz, צָרָה for "oppression". 14. Read with Bickell, הִקְדָּה for "behold!". Read, with Staerk (cited by Gunkel), בְּדוֹר for "the generation". 20. Read with G, בְּעֶרְבָה for "in the awakening (trans.)". 24. Insert בְּאֶרֶץ, omitted through similarity with the next word. 26. Om., with Duhm, "the rock of my heart". 28. Om., with G, "Yahweh". The last clause of the verse is a liturgical gloss, still further expanded in G.

"The great Nevertheless" is the descriptive title prefixed by Kittel to this psalm, and its contents justify the phrase. It opens with a single verse in which the atmosphere of the whole finds expression. The poet has honestly considered the facts of life, and faces his problems with courage. Now—as the Hebrew particle at the beginning implies—he is able to state with confidence his general conclusion. That particle is significant; it occurs again in *vs.* 13 and 18, "After all, it must be so, in spite of appearances to the contrary, and in spite of desperate inward struggles, *God* ('*el*, as in *v.* 11) *is good to the upright*."

The psalmist has a right to say this. It is not the glib statement of an easy and superficial orthodoxy. He has descended into the depths of torturing doubt, and this side of his experience is set before us in *vs.* 2-11. His problem is general, but his treatment is his own. The emphatic pronoun at the beginning of *v.* 2—*As for me*—doubly emphasized by the anacrusis, serves at once to link the psalmist's account of his case with the general conclusion of *v.* 1. His experience is described in language which makes us think of a tyro on skates. His *feet had all but slipped*—flown this way and that without his volition or control—and his *steps* had been within *a hair's breadth* of utter confusion: a strong word, meaning literally "poured out". But it is not on level ice that this has befallen him, but on a precipice edge, and there had been a moment when it had seemed that he was actually over the brink.

His danger had not been physical; he had been stirred by sudden

*hot* emotion, jealousy, anger, or a combination of the two, by the peace and prosperity of unworthy men. It is not only their wickedness, but also their bearing and their success that have moved him. Their language is that of *boasters* (v. 3), full of arrogant mockery and overweening pride, counting all others their inferiors, and speaking of them as such (v. 8). Nothing on earth commands their respect, and the heavens are not too high for their criticism (v. 9), for they treat God himself as ignorant and stupid (v. 11). Yet they are prosperous, and the psalmist's bitter humour finds an outlet in his picture of them. In the East, be it remembered, the first use made of newly-won wealth is to spend it on unlimited food, and it is often literally true that a man's girth varies directly as his income. So wealthy have these men become that they have passed all familiar limits (they have no *bonds*), and seem to be positively globular, with no flaw in the smooth circle of their belly (v. 4). The *trouble* that toil brings with it and the strokes whereby *mankind* are *plagued* pass them by; they have all they can want of the good things of life (vv. 5, 10). From their fat heart are schemes of iniquity born, and gorgeous pictures are painted by their extravagant and lawless fancy (v. 7). Their language, too, is *arrogant*, and they speak *in disdain*—as the Hebrew idiom has it, "from their lofty position", thinking all men beneath them. But God has not said a word.

In the second part of the psalm, vv. 12–28, the poet gives the story of the war within himself, and of the victory he finally won. His first reaction had been to succumb to an almost irresistible temptation, and to doubt the validity of his fundamental belief in goodness (vv. 12–15). It was here that he had slipped on the brink of the cliff, and all but been dashed to spiritual ruin. "*Behold!*", he cries, "*these are the wicked*", and the opening interjection is almost a conditional particle—indeed, it must have had that sound to a writer whose daily vernacular was Aramaic. "*If* that is what wickedness achieves, then, after all (again the particle of v. 1), I must have been wrong. All my struggles for purity and innocence have been a failure; goodness is no good. I have let myself suffer pain and persecution for a phantom and a baseless dream" (vv. 13 f.). But from that peril the psalmist had been saved. He knew that he did not stand alone: there were others fighting in the ranks beside him. To allow himself to harbour the doubt would have been to desert to the enemy, and to range himself on the side of evil. So would he have been *traitor* to his loyal comrades, the *children* of that God whom all claimed as their Father.

So he returned to the war of the spirit. *Trouble* and toil lay before him (v. 16), and his *heart grew bitter*, his mind soured by the contemplation of the facts, while there was, as it were, a mordant tooth, *gnawing* at the centre of his emotional life, like the vulture tearing Prometheus' liver (v. 21). Worse and worse grew the atrophy of his tortured soul,

till, in utter abasement, he speaks of himself as a *very beast*, with a curious Hebrew idiom by which a plural form is used to emphasize an idea. But at last he found himself in the *holy places* of God's heart, not merely in the outward temple, but in that inner shrine of the spirit where God and man may most surely meet (*v.* 17). He turns to that God whose cause he has so nearly betrayed: "After all, it must be so" (again the particle of *v.* 1), the wicked, too, stand in peril, *in slippery places*, but their danger is enhanced by God's hostility. We cannot here endorse the psalmist's attitude; the days are long past when Jew or Christian can think of God *beguiling* men to their ruin (*v.* 18). But these men have set themselves up against God, and must find that he *does know*, that their superiority over others is met by the fact that God will *despise* them, think no more of them than a waking man does of the figures brought before him in a *dream*, and hurl them to sudden, complete and horrible ruin (*vv.* 19 f.).

Then, once more, the emphatic pronoun at the beginning of *v.* 23 brings us back from wrath to love, from the wicked to the loyal servant of God. Now the psalmist knows who it is that has gripped his *right hand* on the edge of the precipice, who it is that *leads* him *in the path*. But more, he knows, too, that a vital union with God is as eternal as God himself. He thinks, possibly, of Enoch, and, though he does not contemplate for himself an escape from physical death (*cf.* *v.* 26), he is certain that a material event like the dissolution of the body is powerless to break the love-forged links of the soul. In heaven and in earth, living or dying, he has but one supreme pleasure (*v.* 25) and one passion, *nearness to God*, the only experience which he can really call *good* (*vv.* 26, 28). Those that are false to God will perish—nay, have already been annihilated, since their real self, their very soul, has been destroyed by their sin (*v.* 27). But the man who has once found his *refuge in the Lord*, and has known the secret of his intimate converse, has attained an experience transcending all the fortunes of the material world, and has already entered into life eternal.

### *Religious Teaching*

In a sense, this psalm is an epitome of the book of *Job*. While it lacks the intensity of feeling, the grandeur of conception, the dramatic character-drawing, and the intellectual depth manifested in that great poem, it deals with the same problem, follows the same line of thought, and offers one of the few Old Testament adumbrations of a genuine doctrine of immortality. Its thought is in some ways more closely akin to that of Greece than to that of normal Israel. The psalmist does not contemplate the resurrection of the material body, achieved by the return of the spirit that vanished at death, but rather a personality temporarily united to a physical being, which can, if it be really

in touch with God, survive the disintegration of its earthly frame, and stand without veil of mortal clay in the immediate presence of the eternal Father. But the path by which this goal is reached is emphatically Hebrew, and not Greek. The Hellenic belief in immortality was based on psychology and metaphysic. That of the psalmist, like that of Job, had an ethical and religious foundation. God being what these men, in the depths of their soul, knew him to be, no other result was possible. A problem in religious thought, as in science, is created by an apparent clash between theory and fact. Either the theory must be abandoned, or further truth must be elucidated which will bring the discordant fact into the universal scheme. The theory here is the character of God, as revealed through the great prophets; the conflicting fact is the seeming injustice and inequality of divine retribution. The psalmist resisted the temptation to abandon the basic theory, and the inevitable conclusion—the first step towards a final solution—was a recognition of another life, in which eternal values should be vindicated.

### PSALM 74

PSALM 74 is called a *Maskil* (see Vol. I, p. 15), and belongs to the class of the Laments of the Community. It describes the desolation of the land, especially of the temple, and pleads for divine interposition. Its date is not easy to determine. The temple has been defiled and partially, at least, destroyed by fire. Much of its woodwork has been hewn in pieces, and the enemy has set up heathen symbols, while sacred buildings have been burnt throughout the whole country. The land is spiritually desolate, too; though the invader has vilely insulted the God of Israel, he has made no response, and there is not even a prophet to foretell how or when the trouble will end.

There are two familiar events in the history of Israel which are commonly mentioned in connexion with this psalm: the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B.C., and the defilement of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. Theodoret's suggestion that we have here a prediction of the burning of the temple by Titus in A.D. 70 need not be taken seriously. In favour of the earlier date we have the facts in general, though the psalmist mentions neither the destruction of the city nor the deportation of the people. Most of the details would fit the Maccabæan age—the apparent reference to the synagogues (*vv.* 4 and 8), the profanation of the temple (*v.* 7), the erection of heathen symbols (*v.* 4), while in *v.* 6 G read "doors" for "carvings" (cf. I Macc. 4<sup>38</sup>), and the "dark places of the earth" in *v.* 20 have been interpreted (though wrongly, see below) as the caves

and dens in which the faithful took refuge from Syrian persecution. Further, the failure of prophecy (*v.* 9) is held to be reflected also in I Macc. 4<sup>46</sup>, 9<sup>27</sup>, 14<sup>41</sup>. It is pointed out, however, that the desolation had taken place long before the psalm was written (*vv.* 1, 3, 10), that Antiochus did not actually burn the whole temple (*v.* 7), and that the psalm contains no reference either to the damage done in Jerusalem itself, or to the systematic attempts made by Antiochus to stifle Judaism by destroying the books of the Law, and by inflicting the death penalty for certain religious observances.

Another view, championed by Bittenwieser, is that the psalm dates from the first half of the fourth century, when certainly Judah was involved in grave trouble with Artaxerxes Ochus (359–338 B.C.). Our references to these events, however, are obscure and uncertain; it is easy to assign a work to a period of which we have so few records, because no discordant details are known to us. In view of the licence a poet often allows himself in describing events, and the hyperbole to which he is sometimes given, we can hardly take psalms like this and Ps. 79 as a basis for the reconstruction of detailed history. All we can say is that the psalm may date from this period, and that we know of no other which would suit it better.

A different type of explanation would make no reference to a historical situation, and see in this psalm a composite work. The first part, *vv.* 1–11, may be a lament of a type familiar to us in certain Tammuz liturgies, while the second, with its suggestions of the creation mythology, may be in some way connected with the New Year festival. The main difficulty in this view is that *vv.* 18 ff. certainly return to the spirit of prayer and petition, and take up again the note struck in the first part.

Decision is difficult, certainty impossible. If the psalm arose out of a definite historical situation, the view least open to objection may be that of Calès, who suggests that a poem originally written about 540 B.C. was worked over and “modernized” to fit later events, possibly the assaults of Artaxerxes Ochus or of Antiochus IV.

The metre of the psalm is 2 : 2, with 3 : 2 in *vv.* 2, 6–7, and, possibly, 20. The first part of *v.* 20 appears to have lost two significant words.

*Maskil. Asaph's.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Wherefore, O God,<br>Thine anger burns lurid                                | hast thou cast off for ever ?<br>against the flock thou didst feed ;<br>thou didst purchase of old— |
| 2. Remember thy congregation,<br>Thou redeemedst the tribe of thy<br>heritage, | Mount Zion, where thou dwellest.<br>to the everlasting ruins,<br>by the foe ° in thy sanctuary °.   |
| 3. Step with giant stride<br>To the havoc once wrought                         |   |
| 4. Thine adversaries have roared against<br>thee                               | in the midst of ° thy assemblies ° ;  |



- They have raised their emblems,  
 ° Like one lifting ° on high  
 6. ° They have hewn down ° its carvings  
 And with the hatchet they have smitten  
 them off,  
 They have profaned to the ground  
 8. And have said in their heart,  
 ° Come, and let us cause to cease °  
 9. Our emblems we see not ;  
 Nor is there with us  
 10. How long, O God,  
 Shall the foe despise  
 11. Why drawest thou back  
 ° And thy right hand withholdest °  
 12. ° But thou, O God °,  
 Working triumph
13. Thou didst defeat  
 The heads of the monsters  
 14. Thou didst shatter  
 Gavest him as meat  
 15. Thou didst rend open  
 Thou didst dry up  
 16. Thine is the day ;  
 Thou didst ordain  
 17. Thou didst establish  
 Summer and winter—
18. Remember this—  
 And a foolish people  
 19. Give not ° to the falcon °  
 The life of thy lowly  
 20. Look on ° thy covenant °  
 For the dark places of the earth are  
 full  
 21. Let them not turn back  
 Let the lowly and poor  
 22. Arise, O God,  
 Remember thine insults  
 23. Forget not  
 The tumult of them that rise against  
 thee,
- emblems (5) ° we know not °.  
 axes in forest-thickets,  
 with the axe together.  
 (7) ° they have burnt ° in the fire thy  
 sanctuary.  
 the home of thy name.  
 ° Let us smite them ° together,  
 all God's assemblies in the land.  
 there is no more any prophet,  
 one that knoweth how long ?  
 shall the adversary insult ?  
 thy name for ever ?  
 thy hand, ° O God ° ?  
 within thy bosom ?  
 art my King for ever,  
 in the midst of the earth.
- the Sea by thy might,  
 didst crush on the waters.  
 the heads of Leviathan,  
 ° as fodder ° to jackals.  
 fountain and torrent ;  
 perennial rivers.  
 yea, thine the night ;  
 ° the sun for a light °.  
 all the bounds of the earth ;  
 thou didst form them.
- the foe ° doth insult thee °,  
 despiseth thy name.  
 the soul of thy dove ;  
 forget not forever.
- ° of pride and violence °.  
 crushed ° and ashamed ° ;  
 praise thy name.  
 plead thy cause ;  
 from fools all the day.  
 the noise of thine adversaries,  
 that cometh up continually.

## Text-critical Notes

3. Read, with G, *בְּהֵיכָלֶךָ* for "in the sanctuary". Read, with many MSS *מוֹעֲדֶיךָ*. 5. Read (cf. G, *לֹא יָדְעוּ*) *לֹא יָדְעוּ* for "it shall be known", and attach to v. 4. Read *כְּבָרִים* for "as one bringing". 6. Read, with G, *וְעַתָּה* for "and now". 7. Read (cf. G), *וְשִׁלְּחוּ* for "they sent". 8. Read, with Kittel, *נִשְׁבִּיחֵהוּ* for "we will oppress them" (?). Read, following many G MSS, *וְנִשְׁבִּיחֵהוּ*. 11. Insert *וְאֱלֹהִים* (Buhl, *יהוה*). Read, with Bickell, *וְתִבְלֵהוּ* for "destroy", and transpose to after "thy right hand". 12. Read, with Ley, *וְיִתְּנֵהוּ* for "and God". 14. Read, with Wellhausen, *לְעַם* for "to a people". 16. Read, with Duhm, *לְמִאֲוִיר שֶׁמֶשׁ* for "light and sun". 18. Read *וְיִבְדֶּה* for "insulted Yahweh". 19. Read, with Perles, *לְאִיָּה* for "to the animal of". 20. Read, with G, *לְבְרִיתֶךָ* for "the covenant". Read (cf. Bickell), *וְחִמָּם* for "dwellings of violence". 21. Read with Duhm, *וְנִבְלָם* for "ashamed".

The psalm falls into four parts of unequal length : (a) *vs.* 1-3, (b) *vs.* 4-11, (c) *vs.* 12-17, (d) *vs.* 18-23. The first of these is introductory, and puts briefly the substance of the whole. The poet feels keenly the contrast between two outstanding facts : the Love of God and the Wrath of God. Israelite tradition carried his thought back to

the days of old, when Love had been manifest in the *purchase* of Israel, when God had *redeemed* his people and his city, as a wealthy man might *redeem* the lost *heritage* of an impoverished kinsman. Not only so, but all through history he has been the Good Shepherd. Israel has been his flock, not a "flock of slaughter" (cf. Zech. 11<sup>7</sup>), doomed to the butcher's knife, but a "flock of pasture", to be protected, guided, and *fed*. But now it is Wrath that dominates the experience of the *tribe*. Hebrew tended to fasten on the concrete and physical evidences of emotion; and anger suggested the distended and bloodshot nostrils of a furious animal. So fiercely does God's *anger burn*, that his breath, as it were, is *lurid* with murky smoke. To the psalmist this is unintelligible; he can hardly believe in his own experience, and he appeals to God to come *with giant strides*, a gait that will step high over every obstacle, and at least view the *ruins* whose restoration seems for ever impossible (v. 3). Surely, then, his compassion will be roused and his spirit stirred to action!

Vv. 4-11 describe, in some detail, the *havoc* in the *sanctuary* and elsewhere. The temple has been attacked, much as was the Jewish shrine in Elephantine. Its *carved* woodwork has been *hewn down with axe and hatchet*, perhaps to remove the gold with which it was richly overlaid, *fire* has been put to the building, and the place has been desecrated by the erection of heathen *symbols*, probably emblems of a foreign deity. So the whole of the building has been *profaned*, from its highest pinnacle *to the ground*. Even so, the enemy has not been content, but has carried his desolation over the whole land, and, wherever he has found a place of worship, a spot where God and man may meet, he has *smitten* and dispersed the *assemblies* of worshippers; the Hebrew *mo'ed* is never used in a concrete sense. None can tell when these troubles will cease, or when God will avenge these *insults* to his *Name*. It is as if he had put out his *hand* to help, and had then changed his mind, and thrust it back into his *bosom*; there is no longer a *prophet* through whom his purpose may be known, and men have no clue to his will except in the ruin spread about them.

The psalmist is not merely distressed, he is puzzled. For (vv. 12-17) there is no doubt that God *could* have saved his people had he pleased. Away back in the distant past, at the very beginning of time, he had encountered and destroyed enemies far more terrible than Israel's present oppressors. The old creation-myth, so well known to us from Babylonian and other sources, was current in Israel even in the psalmist's days, and men still told the story of how God had *defeated*, frustrated, and rendered ineffective, the mighty powers of Chaos—the *Sea*, the *Monsters*, *Leviathan*, or, in Babylonian terms, Tiamat and Kingu with all their brood. The form of the myth (for it varied in Israel, cf. *Myth and Ritual*, pp. 177 f.) adopted by the psalmist recorded the

destruction of the enemies, the *giving* of them as *meat* to the "howling things" of the desert. These creatures will inevitably be identified as *jackals* by any one who has heard them making the Eastern night hideous, but they may be spirits of the wild; the frontier between zoology and demonology was not strictly drawn in ancient Israel. This triumph had been only a preliminary to the construction of the universe as man knows it, the making of *fountains*, the *day*, the *night*, the *sun*, and the coasts which formed the *bounds of the earth*.

The psalmist believes intensely that all this is the work of the God of Israel. Again and again, with almost aggressive repetition, he uses the emphatic pronoun *Thou*, its significance being constantly reinforced by the strong metrical accent it receives. Perhaps the poet had in mind the myths of foreign peoples, and was insisting that it was *his* God, and no other, who had won this cosmic triumph. Certainly it gave him ground on which his renewed appeal for deliverance and vengeance (*vv.* 18–23) might be based. A *foolish people* has *insulted* and *despised* Israel's God, and pursues his *covenant* race as a *falcon* hunts a *dove*. The *dark places of the earth* are sometimes interpreted as the dens in which the pious Israelites hid from their oppressors, but the psalmist would hardly have said that these were *full of violence*—*i.e.*, of crime. They are rather the spots in the land which have been most afflicted by the adversary, where iniquity has most been rampant, and the poet may have had in mind a thought like that of Isa. 9<sup>1</sup>. So, with a moving appeal to the divine honour and compassion, the psalmist pleads with God to vindicate at once himself and his *lowly* people.

### *Religious Teaching*

We do not look for formal theology in a *cri du cœur* like this psalm; we can but note in a word the faith on which its pleading is based. God is the victorious Creator of the universe, the righteous and omnipotent Ruler of the world. At the same time, he has a special interest in Israel, and a plea addressed to his loving heart will scarcely fail of its purpose.

### PSALM 75

IN its present form this psalm is a community hymn of thanksgiving, and may have had a place in some ritual of praise following on a national victory, or may have been intended as an expression of eschatological hopes. The opening verse is normal in this type of psalm, but would naturally be followed by a recital of the "deeds of wonder" which are being acknowledged. Here a pronouncement by Yahweh (*vv.* 2–3) follows immediately, without the introductory words which we should expect. While the doctrine of "corporate personality" would make

it possible for such a psalm to be sung by the community as a whole, its expressions would fit an individual rather better. *Vv.* 2-3, the words of Yahweh, were presumably uttered by a priest (or prophet?), but such statements are usually the answer to an appeal by the worshipper, whether an individual or the whole community. We are thus led to suspect that we have here a part only of an original psalm of an individual, to which, after the loss or intentional omission of the opening sentences, *v.* 1 was prefixed to give the psalm a communal reference. Further, the tone of the whole (from *v.* 2 onwards) rather suggests the *formulae* of a prayer for success than a thanksgiving for a victory already won. The normal scheme of such psalms is: (a) petition, (b) divine response, (c) assurance of triumph. The two latter elements are obvious in the psalm as it now stands.

The structure of the psalm is interesting, since it falls naturally into well-marked pairs of verses, and the arrangement may be genuinely strophic. Commentators are not agreed as to the extent of the divine utterance, but *vv.* 6 f., which are clearly put in the mouth of the worshipper, seem to presuppose some such language as that of *v.* 4 f.

We have no clue to the date of the psalm; it is probably a comparatively late adaptation of a pre-exilic hymn.

Metre: 3 : 3, with 2 : 2 : 2 in *v.* 7 and 3 : 3 : 3 in *v.* 8b. *V.* 1 is 2 : 2.

*For the Precentor : To "Hurt not." Psalm. Asaph's. Song.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 (2). We praise thee !<br>And we call on thy name,   | O God, we praise !<br>we recount ° thy deeds of wonder. |
| 2 (3). ' ° I ° will choose an appointed<br>time,  | I will judge uprightly,                                 |
| 3 (4). The earth melteth, and all that<br>dwell therein,  | I established its pillars.' Selah.                      |
| 4 (5). I say to the boasters, Boast not !   | and to the wicked, Lift not your horn !                 |
| 5 (6). Lift not your horn on high,  | ° speak not ° arrogantly ° against the<br>Rock °.       |
| 6 (7). For not from east nor from west,   | nor ° from the wilderness cometh<br>uplifting °.        |
| 7 (8). For in Yahweh's hand is a cup  | and ° foaming ° wine filleth the ° wine-<br>skin °.     |
| 8 (9). And it hath passed from one to ° another °,<br>yea, its dregs ° are never drained out °, | all the wicked of the earth drink of it.                |
| 9 (10). But ° I will exult for ever °,  | I will sing to the God of Jacob.                        |
| 10 (11). And all the horns of the wicked I<br>will hew off,                                     | and the horns of the righteous shall be<br>exalted.     |

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Read, with V (cf. G), וְהָרְאֵנוּ בְּשֵׁמֶךָ נִסְפָּר for "and near is thy name; they tell of". 2. Read אֶלֶּכִּי for "for". 5. Insert אֵל with G. Read בְּצִנּוֹר (cf. G) for "with the neck". 6. Read מִבְּרֵךְ הַרִים for "from the wilderness of mountains". 7. Read, with G, חֲמֵר for "fermented". Read מִשֶּׁה (cf. Köhler in ZAW LV. 161, and Urdu *māsak* = goatskin bottle). 8. Insert אֶל־יָהּ with G. Read, with G, לֹא יִמָּצֵי for "they drain". 9. Read, with G, אֶגִּיל for "I will declare".

Most of the phrases used in the heading to this psalm are familiar, but we have one most interesting addition, found again in Pss. 57-59. This is the phrase "Hurt not", which apparently indicates the tune or mode to be used. It is natural to suggest that it is connected with the old vintage song beginning, "Hurt it not, for a blessing is in it!" cited in Isa. 65<sup>a</sup>.

The opening ascription of praise is of a familiar type. As we have seen, a plea for help may have dropped out before v. 2, and we pass at once to the divine answer. It comes with an emphatic "*I*", if the suggested text be right. Yahweh may have delayed his action, but he has appointed a time, which he will use aright (cf. Hab. 2<sup>b</sup>), to give his just decision. Lest there be any doubt as to his power to enforce his sentence, he cites his control over the physical universe. It seems as though there had been an ancient myth which told of an earlier stage in world history, which, owing to the weakness or the blunders of the older world-rulers, ended in confusion and chaos. Then came Yahweh and *established its pillars*.

In confidence born of this pronouncement, the psalmist turns to his enemies, *the wicked, the boasters*, who have *lifted their horn on high*—a familiar metaphor for arrogance. They have *spoken arrogantly against God*, and the enormity of their offence is emphasized by the choice of the divine epithet—the Rock. What folly to magnify oneself against the Immoveable and the Immutable! Nowhere in the world, *east or west*, is the power to *lift high* found, except in God, and the psalmist has already had the assurance that God will act in this case. Primitive myths told of a poisoned cup which the old gods might force on a vanquished enemy, a cup which would intoxicate, if not destroy. Yahweh has such a cup, which he makes to *pass* from hand to hand. He has, too, a whole *skin*, full of the *foaming wine* of his wrath. It is inexhaustible; *for its dregs are never drained out* (the metre shows the stress on the negative), and however many be *the wicked of the earth*, *all must drink of it*. And so the psalmist concludes on the double note of vengeance and deliverance. The *horns* that the wicked have *lifted* so high in their arrogance will be hewn off by the psalmist, through the might of Yahweh, while he himself will *exult* and *sing* praises to *the God of Jacob*, from the proud height to which he himself has been raised.

### *Religious Teaching*

Like most psalms of this type, Ps. 75 breathes a vindictive note which is repulsive to Christian thought and feeling. But it does stress the omnipotence and the righteousness of God, and expresses the intense conviction that "right the day must win".

## PSALM 76

MOST recent commentators are of opinion that this psalm belongs to a group connected with the ritual of the New Year festival. On this theory the ceremonial included a mimic warfare in which Yahweh overcame and destroyed the forces of darkness and death, so bringing life to the world and salvation to his people. Older interpreters held that it was a song of thanksgiving commemorating the triumph of a Judæan king over his enemies. But the references at the end to the divine judgements and to the justification of the poor do not fit either of these two hypotheses, and it would seem that an original pre-exilic hymn was adapted for more than one purpose. In any case, *v.* 11 is quite out of place in the original psalm (note, *e.g.*, the use of the *tetragrammaton*), and must be regarded as the latest of the adjusting phrases. As with so many psalms, the best explanation of the present form seems to be a pre-exilic hymn thus repeatedly worked over to suit new situations.

The text is fairly well preserved, and where it is in doubt the versions generally offer some help. Possibly *vv.* 4 and 5 need a more drastic reconstruction than that adopted below, but none of the attempts (*e.g.*, that of Gunkel) commend themselves to the present writer as being more than brilliant free compositions, and there seems to be no compelling reason for supposing that they offer us what the psalmist actually wrote :

Metre : 3 : 3 ; *vv.* 4-5, 3 : 2, 3 : 2, 2 : 3 ; *v.* 11, 2 : 2, 2 : 2.

*For the Precentor : To stringed instruments. Psalm. Asaph's. Song.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 (2). Famed is God in Judah,   | in Israel his name is great,   |
| 2 (3). And his booth is in Salem,<br>He hath shattered the flames of the bow, | and his dwelling in Zion 3 (4) ° is set °.<br>the shield and sword and war-weapon.<br>Selah. |
| 4 (5). ° More terrible ° art thou, O mighty one,                              | ° than ravening lion °.  |
| 5 (6). Spoiled are the stout of heart,<br>Nor have the mighty men             | stilled in their sleep.<br>found their power.  |
| 6 (7). At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,   | ° sank in slumber the riders on horse-back °.  |
| 7 (8). Thou art terrible,   | and who shall stand in thy sight<br>° for thy wrath ° ?                                      |
| 8 (9). From heaven thou utterest judgement ;                                  | earth feareth and is still.  |
| 9 (10). ° When thou risest ° for judgement, O God,                            | to save all the lowly of the earth.  |
| 10 (11). For the wrath of man doth praise thee,                               | the remnant of wrath ° hold festival to thee °.  |
| 11 (12). Make vows and fulfil them<br>Let all about him bring                 | to Yahweh your God,<br>a gift ° to the terrible one °.                                       |
| 12 (13). ° Thou cuttest off ° the spirit of princes,                          | thou that art terrible to the kings of the earth.  |

*Text-critical Notes.*

3. Read שָׁמַיָּה (= שְׁמַיָּה) for "there". 4. Read, with Targ., נִוְרָא for "glorious," Read (cf. Gunkel), מֵאֵרִיָּה בָרָךְ for "from mountains of prey". 6. Read, with G,

נִרְדְּמוּ רֶכֶבִּי סוּסִים for "the chariot is made to slumber and the horse". 7. Read with G, מֵאִפֶּךָ for "from that time thine anger". 9. Read, with Schlögl, בְּקוֹמֶיךָ for "when (he) rises". 10. Read, with G, מִתְתַּנֶּךְ for "thou girdest thyself". 11. Read, with G, לִנְלוֹאָה for "to fear". 12. Read מִבְּצֹר for "he cuts off".

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 11.

The note of praise is struck in the opening words of the psalm. Yahweh (here, as elsewhere in Bks. II and III, "God" has been substituted for this name) is *famed*; he may be known; indeed, he makes it difficult for men not to know him. *His name is great*, for he has a reputation, and his personality and deeds (all this is involved in the Hebrew concept of the "name") have impressed themselves both on *Judah* and on *Israel*. The two terms may be an instance of synonymous parallelism, or, especially if the psalm be early, they may be intended to include both north and south. But, wherever else he may be *famed*, it is especially in Jerusalem that Yahweh has set up his *booth*—a term strongly suggestive of the New Year ritual.

In vv. 4-6 the psalmist gives an outline of the deeds which have won this *fame*. Yahweh has shown himself mighty in battle; he has shattered the arrows that have leapt like *flames* from the *bow*, and all other weapons, defensive and offensive. Repeatedly the word *terrible* strikes the emotional keynote of the psalm. Yahweh is as a *ravaging lion*, and his foes, despoiled of their arms, *sink* into such helplessness that they seem to slumber to the point of death. Even men possessed of the unseen battle-power (and we have here a remote survival of the *mana* conception) have lost the use of *their hands* (cf., for the general idea, Am. 2<sup>14</sup>). Mounted warriors, yet stranger than chariots to Israel, fall into a *slumber* deeper than natural sleep at the divine word.

Once more, in vv. 7-9, the Terror is presented, but this time it is primarily in *judgement*. The former picture was that of Yahweh returning in triumph from the conquest of his foes, and may well have formed part of a scene from the enthronement drama. If the same theme be continued here, Yahweh has now taken his seat *in heaven*, presumably to pass sentence on his captured enemies. *The earth feareth and is still*, but the thought of the psalm (possibly owing to a later adaptation) passes from the cosmic struggle to the needs of *the lowly* in his own land. No Hebrew could contemplate justice without thinking of the depressed classes.

This is but a passing note, and the psalmist returns to the main theme in vv. 10, 12—v. 11 is obviously a late adaptation; there is nothing to attract *vows* in the story of the great triumph. Many commentators see in v. 10 a reference to Edom and Hamath: "The wrath of Edom doth praise thee, the remnant of Hamath doth hold festival to thee". But, as far as our knowledge goes at present, we have no reason

to suppose that the New Year Myth involved these two countries in particular, and, though they might have indicated the southern and northern limits of Israel, the expressions would be very unusual in this sense. On any rendering, however, we have the bold statement that even human *wrath* can be used for the *praise* of Yahweh. Here is the supreme conquest; a dangerous passion can be overcome, controlled, and sanctified. The very *remnant*, the last extreme of man's anger, can be used to the glory of God. If Yahweh can bring this about, no wonder that he can *cut off the spirit of princes*, as a grape-gatherer strips his vines, or that he is *terrible to all the kings of the earth*.

### Religious Teaching

The psalm hymns the majesty and power of God, particularly in his dealings with the human world. Here it adds something to the normal Enthronement psalms, which commonly stress the conquest of personified forces in the realm of Nature. God's attributes are such as to make men stand in awe of him—note the conversion of human anger and the closing words. The writer put a very high value on the personality of Yahweh, but he had not attained to the perfect love which casts out fear.

### PSALM 77

PSALM 77 presents some interesting features. It begins as a dirge, probably of the community, and ends as a hymn of praise, celebrating Yahweh's deeds in Nature and in History. It is, then, only to be expected that some commentators have seen in it a combination of two pieces, though they differ as to whether the division should come after v. 9 or after v. 15. There is, however, no real incongruity between the appeal of vv. 1–9 and the recollection of a glorious past in vv. 10 ff.; a suppliant often seeks to strengthen his case with a compliment, or to comfort himself with the memory of deliverance in days gone by. There are, however, one or two facts which suggest a division after v. 15.

The first point is the structure of the whole. It is worth noting that the use of *Selah* here seems to be significant. It occurs at the end of vv. 3, 9, and 15. Each of the sections 4–9 and 10–15 contain six lines, and each may be regarded as a self-contained whole within the larger complex. In other words, these sections have the marks of the true "strophe". We may even conjecture that the opening section was once longer than it now is; the transition from 2b to 2c is very abrupt and awkward, and the last clause lacks any real balance. It is quite possible that some two and a half lines have been omitted, either



by accident or by design. This, of course, is pure conjecture, but it is fairly clear that the metrical form changes after *v.* 15. *Vv.* 1-15 are 3 : 3 (except *v.* 2, which, as it now stands, is 3 : 3 : 3, but see above), while *vv.* 15-19 are 3 : 3 : 3 throughout. They might possibly be arranged as 3 : 3 six times, or we might suppose that  $(3 : 3 : 3) \times 4 = (3 : 3) \times 6$  is a good metrical equation in Hebrew. But the latter suggestion is too uncertain, and the parallelism is very strongly in favour of the 3 : 3 : 3 arrangement. The combination of 3 : 3 : 3, as an occasional variant, with 3 : 3 is quite regular, but the two are normally interspersed, and we rarely find a solid block of the longer form linked up with the shorter.

It is, further, undeniable that with *v.* 16 we meet a new tone and style. The theme, it is true, naturally continues that of *vv.* 9-15, except that (a significant point) *v.* 15 should logically follow *v.* 19. But while *vv.* 9-15 recall the acts of God in meditative language, *vv.* 16-19 seem to break irrepressibly from a heart overflowing with joy, and move with a vigour and a swing quite foreign to the earlier portion. The contemplative mood indicated by the verbs of *v.* 12 (קנה and יש) is emphatically not a likely source for the spontaneous outburst of exultation which thrills us in *vv.* 16-19.

The balance of probability, then, lies on the side of a division after *v.* 15. The combination of the two pieces, however, may well have been intentional. Neither reaches a formal conclusion, and the facts suggest that a compiler found these two fragments and put them together. It may be noted in passing that *vv.* 16–19 would form a good transition from *vv.* 1–15 to Ps. 78.

Nothing has yet been said about *v.* 20. Its metrical form is 3 : 3, which suggests an accidental mutilation, and the appearance of Aaron in the last clause looks like a late addition. We may suspect that the original poem, whose opening sentences have not survived, was much longer, and went on to illustrate the power of Yahweh as exhibited in the history of Israel. The surviving portion has some of the marks which we commonly associate with the New Year ritual, especially in the terror shewn by the vanquished "Deep". But there is nothing in the ritual pattern which leads us to suppose that it involved a poetic history of Israel, and we may rather suggest that the poet was drawing on some form of the creation liturgy to make the introduction to his story of Yahweh's deeds in Israel.

Metre: *Vv.* 1-15, 3 : 3; ובעלילותיו in *v.* 12 has two beats.  
*Vv.* 16-20, 3 : 3 : 3.

*For the Precentor : On Jeduthun. Asaph's. A Psalm.*

r (2). My voice was Godward ! ° and I      my voice was Godward ! ° and he gave  
              cried ° ;    ear ° .

- 2 (3). In the day of distress I sought the Lord,  
° \_\_\_\_\_ °
- 3 (4). I must recall God, and must moan,  
my hand ° was outstretched and never grew numb.  
my soul refused to be comforted.  
I must meditate, and let my spirit faint away.
- 4 (5). ° Fixed ° are the guards of mine eyes,  
I am disturbed and may not speak.
- 5 (6). I have considered the days of old,  
years long past (6) (7). I recall.  
° I commune ° by night with my heart;  
I must meditate, and my spirit ° make search °.
- 7 (8). Will the Lord cast off to eternity ?  
will he never be pleased again ?
- 8 (9). Is his love ended for ever ?  
finished ° ° to all generations ?
- 9 (10). Hath God forgotten to shew favour ?  
or shut up his compassion in wrath ?
- 10 (11). And I said : That is my wounding—  
that the right hand of the Most High doth change.
- 11 (12). I will recall ° thy deeds °, O Yah,  
for ° glorious ° of old was thy wonder-work.
- 12 (13). And I will consider all thy working,  
and on thy deeds I would meditate.
- 13 (14). O God, thy way is in holiness ;  
who is a great God like God ?
- 14 (15). Thou—  
thou shewest among peoples thy strength.
- 15 (16). Thou redeemest with thine arm thy people,  
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.
- 16 (17). The waters saw thee, O God,  
the waters saw thee and were troubled,  
yea, even the deeps kept shaking.
- 17 (18). The clouds streamed with water,  
heaven's vault uttered its voice,  
yea, verily, thine arrows were abroad.
- 18 (19). Hark ! ° the thunder of thy chariot-wheels °,  
thy lightnings illumine the world,  
the earth trembleth and quaketh.
- 19 (20). Thy way is in the sea ° O God °,  
and thy path in great waters,  
and thy footprints may not be known.
- 20 (21). Thou leddest thy people as a flock,  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron,

*Text-critical Notes.*

1. Read אֲנִי for "that I might cry". Read, with G, יִשְׁמַע for "to give ear". Om., with Buhl, "unto me". 2. Om., with Buhl, "by night". Apparently a part of the original text has been lost. 4. Read (cf. G), תִּחַזְקֶנּוּ for "thou hast held". 6. Read, with G, תִּשְׁמַע לִי for "my harp-playing". 8. Omit "a word" (אֶחָד doublet of נֶגֶד; G omits both words). 11. Read, with Schlögl, עָשִׂיתָ for "deeds". Read, with Duhm, אֶזְכֶּר for "let me remember". 18. Lit. "thy thunder in the chariot-wheel". 19. Insert אֶל־הַיָּם.

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 15.

As it has come down to us, this psalm falls into four parts. In the first (vv. 1-3) the psalmist indicates his approach to God. The second section (vv. 4-9) states the problem in more detail, the third (vv. 10-15) is directed to Yahweh (for whose name, as in all this large group, the word "God" has been substituted), and recalls his mighty deeds in the past, while the last division (vv. 16-20) seems to have been taken

from some other source, though it serves in a way to carry further the thought of *vv.* 10-15.

*Vv.* 1-2 describe a common experience in familiar terms. The psalmist has already received the assurance that he needs, but he must place the facts on record. So he tells us that he *cried* to Yahweh, and *sought* him in anxiety. In the attitude of prayer his *hands* had been *outstretched*—a strange word in this connexion, for it normally means “poured out”—and the suppliant posture had been maintained, though his arms might well have *grown numb*. Then it seems as if there were a gap, and when we come to the last clause of *v.* 3, we find the psalmist already in the midst of his troubles. His “*soul*” *refused to be comforted*, and he was driven by some strong inward compulsion to *remember* God, and to come with humility and weakness even to *fainting-point*, “spent with the utter agony of prayer”.

In *vv.* 4-9 we have a fuller statement of the sufferer's plaint. His eyelids, *the guards of his eyes*, are *fixed* so that they cannot close in sleep. Worry has *disturbed* him, smitten him as the hammer smites on the anvil, with steadily repeated blows. In his enforced silence he has turned to history, and has *considered*—counted up, as it were—the records of *years long past*. He has *communed with his heart*, in that muttering undertone in which the Oriental reads to himself, a sound meaningless to the hearer, but rich in possibilities of mystic experience to the reader or speaker. Is there any hope? Can God *be pleased again*? It is as if the psalmist thought of him as temporarily cross and peevish, and wondered when, if ever, he would be in a good humour again. It is noticeable that there is no confession of sin. If Israel had deserved all this, the punishment would have been intelligible, but, as it is, the facts are as puzzling as they are painful. It seems as if God's tender emotions—*favour* and *compassion*—had become atrophied, and would never be active again.

The third section, *vv.* 10-15, introduces an element familiar in this type of psalm, the *recalling* of the *glorious deeds* of Yahweh in the past. It is the *change* in the divine attitude which is at once the psalmist's despair and his hope, and, after a general statement of this part of the theme, he reminds Yahweh of the ancient redemption of Israel. *The sons of Jacob and Joseph* had been in Egypt, helpless as a widow or a fatherless infant. But in their destitution they had found a champion, who had taken up their cause and *redeemed* them. May this experience be repeated!

The fourth section of the poem, *vv.* 16-19, as we have seen, appears to have an independent source; its poetic movement has a vigour and power entirely different from the plaintive beauty of the earlier sections. We note at once the stair-like parallelism of *v.* 16, and the quick change from the perfect—the *waters saw*—suggesting a single

event, to the imperfect of *were troubled* and *kept shaking*. One glimpse of God in his majesty, and *the sea* is thrown into permanent writhing terror, shown in the restless heaving of its surface. *Even* (the particle is metrically emphatic, and therefore has abnormal force) the ancient *deeps* of whom the creation-myths spoke have fallen into a state of trembling. From the primæval conquest of the chaos-ocean, the psalmist's thought passes in *vv.* 17-18 to the phenomena of the sky. It is in the thunderstorm that God is most clearly seen in ancient Israel, and these verses recall the magnificent description of Ps. 29. Here we have the sudden floods *streaming* from above, the crash of the thunder in the cloudy *vault of heaven*, and the rolling which follows, suggesting some great *chariot* whose *wheels* rumble over celestial pavements. The lightnings, the fiery *arrows* of God, dart hither and thither, and, so continuously do they thread their way across the sky (note the imperfect again!), that, with bold metaphor, the psalmist can say that they are walking about in the heavens—as Yahweh walked in the Garden of old. Then back we come once more to the *sea*, and this time the *sea* as it is, and not the deep of sacred myth. God moves across it and his path is in it, but the waters leave no trace of the divine *footprints*, and the mystery of his passage is kept sealed.

All this is but preliminary. The psalmist has depicted the universality and cosmic domination of Yahweh, but he passes on the Israelite conviction—surely the most audacious claim ever made in human history—that Yahweh's primary interest is in his people. To the chaos powers he is a mighty conqueror, to Nature an omnipotent Lord, but to Israel a tender shepherd. He has led them, using Moses and Aaron as his underlings—and the rest is lost.

### *Religious Teaching*

This psalm, as it left the hands of its final editor, strikes two notes, both familiar elsewhere. One is the old, imperfect conception of Yahweh as a God of whimsical and uncertain temper, who may and does inflict suffering with no obvious cause except his own changing mood. The other is a realization of the supremacy of Yahweh in Nature and in history. The latter view is echoed repeatedly by the prophets, but in the former the psalmist has hardly risen to the level of their spiritual insight.

### PSALM 78

LIKE Pss. 105-107, Ps. 78 is mainly a poetical record of the story of early Israel. It defies classification, and it is difficult to think of any

part or aspect of the cultus to which it was especially adapted ; probably it was never actually used in worship. It almost certainly comes from a comparatively late period. The Pentateuch is accepted, practically in its present form ; the treatment of history is that which we associate with Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists, and the account of the crossing of the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds) (cf. *v.* 9) makes it practically certain that the poet was acquainted with P. The purpose of the poem is, apparently, to show the pre-eminence of Judah, and, in particular, of the House of David. The psalmist's method is to work through the history of the early days, contrasting Yahweh's benefits with Israel's rebelliousness and infidelity. He seems to feel that Judah was guiltless in this respect ; it is as if he assumed that every reference to " Israel " in the old story implied the northern kingdom, which goes under that name, in contrast to Judah in the books of *Kings*. He carries back the overthrow of Israel and the triumphant accession of David to the period in which Shiloh was destroyed. Both Saul and the later northern monarchy are completely ignored. Such a presentation—we may almost say distortion—of history was hardly possible till a late date. The style and language do not suggest an early period ; there is at least one very striking Aramaism (*v.* 41). The metre, too, presents features which do not appear commonly in Hebrew poetry until the book of *Job*.

It is possible that the present form is an expansion of a shorter original, perhaps by the insertion of fragments from one other historical poem or more. *Vv.* 42–52, for example, go back again to the Mosaic age, already treated in *vv.* 12 ff., with more detail in certain parts. The story is interrupted from time to time by reflections on the loving bounty of Yahweh and on the sinfulness of Israel.

Metre : 3 : 3, with 3 : 3 : 3 in *vv.* 21, 31, and 55, and 2 : 2 : 2 in *vv.* 6ab, 7bc, 20, 38, and 45. Probably 5b, 40 41, 43 44, 46–48 are 3 : 2, with 2 : 3 in *v.* 42. Anacrusis in *vv.* 20, 21.

*Maskil. Asaph's.*

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Give ear, my people, to my instruction,      | bend your ear to my words.           |
| 2. I would open my mouth in wise sayings,       |                                      |
| 3. What we have heard and known,                | pour out riddles from the past.      |
| 4. We will not hide ° from our sons °,          | and our fathers recounted to us.     |
| The praises of Yahweh and his might,            | telling to an after age.             |
| 5. How he raised up a testimony in Jacob,       | and the marvellous deeds he wrought. |
| How he gave commands to our fathers,            | and set the Law in Israel ;          |
| 6. That another generation might know,          | to teach them to their sons.         |
| That they might rise and recount to their sons, | sons that should be born.            |
| And not forget the feats of God,                |                                      |
| 7. And not become as their fathers,             | 7. and put their trust in God.       |
| A generation that ordered not its heart,        | and keep his commands,               |
| 8. The sons of Ephraim ° were a false bow       | a generation perverse and defiant.   |
|   | whose spirit kept not faith with God |
| 9. They kept not the covenant of God,           |                                      |
|   | that turned ° in the day of battle.  |
|   | and refused to walk in his Law.      |

11. And forgot the ° feats of Yahweh °, and his marvels which he had shewn them.
12. Before their fathers he wrought marvels, in the land of Egypt, the field of Zoan.
13. He clave the sea and brought them through, and made the waters stand up as a heap.
14. And he led them in cloud by day, and all night in the radiance of fire.
15. He clave rocks in the wilderness, ° and gave them drink ° in abundance as from oceans.
16. And he brought out streams from the crag, and water down as rivers.
17. But they still sinned against him yet more, revolting against the Most High in the desert.
18. And they tempted God in their heart, asking food for which they longed.
19. ° ° And they said, ' Can God spread a table in the wilderness ?
20. Behold !  
He hath smitten the rock and waters gushed forth and torrents in spate ;  
Can he also give bread. or provide flesh for his people ?
21. Therefore—  
Yahweh heard in fell rage, and fire blazed out in Jacob,  
yea, hot anger went up in Israel.
22. For they did not believe in God, nor trusted his saving power.
23. So he commanded the skies above, ° ° and the doors of heaven he opened.
24. And he rained upon them manna, ° ° and gave heaven's bread to them.
25. Food of angels did man eat ; he sent ° ° their fill of victuals.
26. He loosed the east wind ° from heaven °, and brought the south in its strength,  
and flying fowl as the sand of the seas.
27. And he rained down ° ° flesh as dust, about their dwellings.
28. ° And they fell ° in the midst of ° their camp °, and their desire he brought home to them.
29. And they ate and were utterly sated, with their meat still in their mouth ;
30. They were not yet estranged from them,  
31. When the anger of God rose high against them, and he slew among their stout ones,  
and brought low Israel's youth.
32. For all this they sinned yet more, and believed not his wonder-works.
33. And he ended their days in vanity, ° and all ° their years in dismay.
34. Had he slain them, they surely would seek him, and once more quest for God ?
35. But they forgot that God was their rock, and God Most High their champion.
36. And deceived him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongue.
37. And their heart held not firmly with him, nor trusted in his Covenant.
38. Though he had been merciful, atoning for their iniquity, and not destroying.
39. And remembered they were but flesh, and stirred not up all his fury.
40. How oft they defied him in the wilderness, a passing breath that cometh not back.
41. And again they tempted God, pained him in the desert !
42. They remembered not his hand, and hurt the Holy of Israel.
43. When he appointed his signs in Egypt, the day he redeemed them from the adversary.
44. And he turned their Nile-streams into blood, and his marvels in the field of Zoan.
45. He sent against them the locust and it devoured them,  
and the frog and it destroyed them.
46. And he gave their produce to grass-hoppers, and their toil to the locust.
47. He killed their vines with hail, and their sycamores with hailstones.
48. And delivered their beasts to hail, and their cattle to lightnings.
49. He loosed on them the heat of his wrath, fury and rage ° he commissioned °.

A mission of angels of evils,

He kept not their soul from death

51. And he smote all the first-born of Egypt,

52. And he moved his people as sheep,

53. And led them secure and unafraid,

54. And brought them to his holy precinct,

55. And he drove out before them nations,  
brought them under the

56. And they tempted and defied God,

57. And went back and were treacherous  
as their fathers,

58. And they angered him with their  
high-places,

59. God heard in fell rage,

60. And tore down the habitations of  
Shiloh,

61. And he gave his strength to captivity,

62. And delivered his people to the sword,

63. Fire devoured his youths,

64. His priests fell by the sword,

65. And the Lord awoke as a sleeper,

66. And he smote his adversaries back-  
wards,

67. And he spurned the tent of Joseph,

68. But chose the tribe of Judah,

69. And built his sanctuary ° as in the  
height °,

70. And he chose David his servant,

71. He brought him from following  
ewe-mothers,

72. And he fed them in perfection of  
heart,

50. he made a smooth road for his  
anger.

and their life he delivered to pestilence.

first-fruits of vigour in the land of Ham.  
and guided them as a flock in the wild-  
erness.

and whelmed their foes in the sea.  
the mount his right hand had won.

lot-line as a possession,  
and made the tribes of Israel dwell in  
their tents.

the Most High, and his testimonies  
they observed not.

they turned as a deceitful bow.

and with their idols roused his jealousy.  
and utterly spurned Israel.

the tent ° where he dwelt ° among men.  
and his beauty to the power of the foe.  
and against his inheritance raged in  
fury.

and his virgins none did praise.  
and for his widows none did weep.  
as a warrior shouting through wine.

age-long shame he put upon them.  
and chose not the tribe of Ephraim.  
the mountain of Zion which he loved.

founded it as the earth for ever.  
and took him from the pens of the flock.

to pasture Jacob his people ° °.  
and with the skill of his hands he led  
them.

### Text-critical Notes

4. Read, with Cheyne, מִבְּנֵי for "from their sons". 9. Read (cf. Duhm) הַקֶּשֶׁת לְמִיָּה הַפָּקָה for "equipped with shooters of the bow". 11. Read, with Baethgen (cited by Gunkel), עֲלִילֹת יְהוָה for "his feats". 15. Read, with G, וַיִּשְׁקֵם for "and he gave drink" (without objective pronoun). 19. Om., with Briggs, "and they spake against God". 24. Om., with Briggs, "to eat". 25. Om., with Buhl, "to them". 26. Read, with G, מִשְׁמַיִם for "in heaven". 27. Om., with Baethgen, "upon them". 28. Read, with G, וַיַּפְלֵי for "and he caused to fall". Read, with G, מַחֲנֵיהֶם for "his camp". 33. Insert, with Gunkel, וְכָל. 49. Read (cf. Graetz), צָרָה for "and distress". 60. Read, with G, שָׁכֵן for "he caused to dwell". 69. Read, with Hitzig, פְּמִרוֹמִים for פְּמִרוֹמִים (probably with same meaning). 71. Om., with Baethgen, "and Israel, his inheritance".

The purpose of this psalm is to illustrate Yahweh's choice of Judah, Jerusalem, and David, in preference to northern Israel, its sanctuaries and its kings. The poet, disregarding the fact that Judah was equally implicated with the rest of the people in its early sins, runs in summary fashion through the history, down to the accession of David. The narrative is interspersed with reflections on the iniquity and faithlessness of the people.

1-11 form the introduction, and show that the aim of the poet is didactic. His own contemporaries and *generations* yet to be *born* are to keep the facts for ever in mind, that they may not *become as their fathers*, especially as the tribe of Ephraim.

In 12 the record begins with the deliverance from *Egypt*. The *field of Zoan*, a northern city (the Greek Tanis), is specified as the scene of Yahweh's deeds. The place was very ancient (cf. Num. 13<sup>22</sup>), though it came into prominence only with the XXIst (1090-945 B.C.) dynasty. 12-16 tell briefly the story of the *marvellous* deeds of Yahweh, the crossing of the Red Sea (where the mention of *the waters standing up as a heap* betrays familiarity with the later narrative of Exod. 14), and the bringing of *water* from the *rock*. More space is given to the sins of the people, especially to the murmurs which culminated in the giving of the *manna* (17-25). The writer imports into his narrative the cosmology and mythology of his own day. The *doors* of the vast storehouse of God above the firmament are *opened*, and *food of angels* is *rained* down upon them. As in Exod. 16, the *manna* is closely connected with the quails (26-31), though the psalmist fastens rather on the other quail narrative, that of Num. 13, especially 31-35. His language is vigorous and, at times, picturesque. The Israelites ask for the *food for which they longed*, the food for which their "soul" yearns. The speed with which the pestilence followed on the quails is illustrated by the remark that the people *were not yet estranged from their lust*, their passionate desire for flesh had not yet been sated. The references in 32-37 are quite general, illustrating the loving patience of God. *Had he slain them*—the poet is, of course, not thinking of total annihilation—the survivors would have repented. The insistence on Israel's failure to remember that *God was their rock* and their *champion*, however, and their refusal to *trust in his Covenant*, suggests that the psalmist had the story of the spies in mind. In spite of repeated acts of apostasy, God had still been *merciful* (38-39). It might have been expected that so rebellious a spirit would have roused the *fury* of God, but he would not give free rein to his own passions, for he remembered that they were but flesh (cp. Gen. 6<sup>3</sup>, Ps. 103<sup>14</sup>).

With 40 the poet makes a fresh start, and goes back to the beginning to give a more detailed account of the plagues of Egypt, culminating in the slaughter of the *first-born* (41-51). Then he touches on the crossing of the *sea*, and the guiding of the people to the *holy precinct, mount Sinai*. 55-58 describe the conquest of Palestine, condemning the religious life of the nation during the age of the Judges, as being contaminated with *high places* and *idols*.

In 60 we approach the climax of the poem, with references to the destruction of *Shiloh*, and the capture of the Ark, the *strength* and the *beauty* of Yahweh, by the Philistines. The subjection of Israel is



vividly described; the marriage rites, in which *virgins* are *praised*, and funeral ceremonies, in which *widows* are mourned, alike cease, while *the priests*, Hophni and Phineas, *fall by the sword*. With a curious compression of history, which eliminates Saul altogether (perhaps because there is no mention of an Ark-shrine in his story), the disaster at Aphek marks the final rejection of the northern tribes, *Joseph* and especially *Ephraim*. David follows immediately, and the psalmist so far ignores the record as to make him, not only the shepherd who *fed his people with perfection of heart*, but the king who *built the sanctuary*, copying the model that exists *in the height* of the heavens, but establishing it *on the earth for ever*.

### *Religious Teaching*

We cannot mistake the definite religious purpose of this psalm. But it belongs to a theology which has long passed away, and was never applicable to any but the people of Israel. It may have been a polemic against the temple on Mt. Gerizim, insisting, in the spirit of *Deuteronomy*, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. But for the rest it simply reiterates doctrines which are woven into the whole fabric of the Old Testament, from first to last—the corruption of the human heart, God's long patience, yielding at last to the irresistible moral demand for punishment, and the truth that history itself is not the least of the channels of divine revelation. In one striking phrase, however (*v.* 38), we get a suggestion of an idea rarely expressed in the Old Testament, though it lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel. The breach between God and man, cleft by human sin, must be bridged by "atonement". This is true of all religions, and the almost universal theory is that this atonement must be made from the human side. In his ascription of the initiative to God, the psalmist seems unconsciously to foreshadow the great truth whose full expression is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

### PSALM 79

IN this psalm we have a cry of suffering, uttered in a time of appalling national distress. Jerusalem has been laid waste, the Temple defiled, numbers of people slaughtered, others imprisoned and condemned to death. It is true that the sanctuary has not been actually destroyed, but Israel has been brought so low as to incur the mockery and scorn of her neighbours. The psalmist pleads for deliverance and for vengeance.

His grief is none the less real, and his lament none the less sincere,

because he found it difficult to express himself in language of his own. His poem is a *cento* of verses and phrases derived from various sources, as even the metrical arrangement suggests, with its sudden change from the 3 : 3 (3 : 3 : 3) to the dirge rhythm in *v.* 6. Many of the sources are recognizable. We may compare the last phrase in *v.* 1 with Mic. 3<sup>12</sup>. The phraseology of *v.* 2 recurs again and again; the best parallels are, perhaps, Jer. 19<sup>7</sup> and Ezek. 29<sup>5</sup>. *V.* 4 recalls Jer. 20<sup>7</sup><sup>1</sup>, and is almost identical with Ps. 44<sup>13</sup>. *V.* 5 differs very slightly from Ps. 89<sup>46</sup> (47). With two slight variations in the text, *vv.* 6–7 agree with Jer. 10<sup>25</sup>. Two rather striking phrases in *v.* 8*b* are closely paralleled, the one in Ps. 59<sup>10</sup>, the other in Ps. 142<sup>6</sup>. *V.* 10*a* appears again in Ps. 115<sup>2</sup>, and similar language is used in Ps. 42<sup>3</sup>. *V.* 11 is another form of Ps. 102<sup>20</sup>, while 13*a*, with a necessary change in the personal pronoun, is also found in Ps. 100<sup>3</sup>. In the circumstances it is not unreasonable to suggest that parts of the psalm for which no extant parallel can be cited are dependent on poems which have not otherwise survived.

The structure thus suggests a late date, but no single event is known which fits all the circumstances. In 586 B.C. the temple was not merely defiled, it was destroyed, and Antiochus IV, in 167 B.C., did not make Jerusalem a ruined mound. It would be easy to refer the psalm to the obscure disaster which befell Judah in the time of Artaxerxes Ochus (359–338 B.C.), but, in view of the form of the psalm, a Persian date seems rather too early. On the other hand, the considerations urged against Maccabæan psalms in general in Vol. I, pp. 67 ff., are too strong to be overlooked, and in the present case the evidence is almost overwhelming. For *v.* 3 is cited (though not exactly) in I Macc. 7<sup>17</sup>, where it is applied to the execution of sixty men of Jerusalem by the treacherous Bacchides (the text reads as though the offender were Alkimus, but it seems more probable that it was the Syrian general who actually perpetrated the deed).

The psalm may have been used in a special ritual on fast days, or at other times of national humiliation in the face of disaster and oppression.

Metre: *Vv.* 1–2, 3 : 3 : 3 ; *vv.* 3–5, 3 : 3 ; *vv.* 6–13, 3 : 2, with 2 : 2 in *vv.* 6–8*a*, 11–12*a*, and 2 : 3 in 13*b*. Anacrusis in *vv.* 1 and 5. *V.* 12*c* is an isolated 3 ; the writer has probably cited part of a verse from some other source.

*A Psalm. Asaph's.*

1. O God !

Gentiles have come into thine inheritance,  
they have defiled thy holy temple,  
they have made Jerusalem ruin-heaps.

2. They have given the carcases of thy servants

as food to the birds of the heavens,  
the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of  
the field.

3. They have poured out their blood like  
water,

round about Jerusalem, with none to  
bury.

4. We have become a mockery to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to those about us.
5. How long!  
O Yahweh, wilt thou be wroth for ever?
6. Pour out thy wrath ° on ° the Gentiles,  
And on kingdoms  
7. For ° they have devoured ° Jacob,  
8. Remember not for us  
Let thy pitying love swiftly meet us,  
9. Help us, O God of our salvation,  
10. Why should the Gentiles say,  
Let there be known among the Gentiles  
in our sight  
11. Let there come before thee  
According to the greatness of thine arm  
12. And requite our neighbours  
For their insult wherewith they have insulted thee, O Lord.  
13. But we are thy people,  
We will praise thee for ever,
- will thy jealousy burn as fire?  
that have not known thee.  
that have not called on thy name,  
and wasted his dwelling.  
the iniquities of the past.  
for we languish sorely.  
for thy glorious name's sake.  
"Where is their God?"  
vengeance for the blood of thy servants.  
° the prisoner's plaint.  
° deliver ° the sons of death.  
sevenfold into their bosom,  
and thy pastured sheep.  
to all generations tell thy praise.

## Text-critical Notes

6. Read, with G, עַל for "unto". 7. Read, with G and Jer. 10<sup>25</sup>, אָכְלִי for "has devoured". 10. Om. "which has been poured out" (gloss). 11. Read, with Ps. 102, <sup>20</sup> אֲנִי for "leave over".

A terrible disaster has befallen Israel (1-4). It has struck a blow, not only at the political life of Jerusalem, but also at its religion. It is true that the city has suffered, though to say that it has been *made ruin-heaps* may be a piece of poetic hyperbole. There has been a cruel slaughter, whose horror has been intensified by the brutal refusal of the aggressor to give the corpses burial. Neighbouring tribes have participated, and are pointing the finger of *scorn*. But worst of all is the fact that *Gentiles have come into the inheritance* of Yahweh, and *defiled the Temple*. Surely Yahweh must take note of this, even if he is not moved by the piteous state of his people?

V. 5 begins a plea for deliverance, with which is interwoven a demand for vengeance on the enemy. Like many another man of faith, from the days of Habakkuk onwards, the psalmist is puzzled by Yahweh's government of the world. He cannot understand why a God whose honour, *his glorious name*, is bound up with Israel, should pour out his wrath *on Jacob*, and not on the *Gentiles*, who *have not known him*. It is true that Israelites of the *past* have been guilty of *iniquities*, and even now a measure of sinfulness is admitted (9). But surely, in view of the issues at stake, God will *atone* for all this, and sweep away the wrong? But that is not all; Israel will not now be satisfied with deliverance. With a bitter resentment, which is intelligible, even if it be not defensible, the psalmist demands *vengeance for the blood of Yahweh's servants*. This, he feels, is necessary to vindicate the offended majesty of Yahweh against the *insults* in act and word perpetrated by the *neighbours* of Israel. The world, too, must know of it, and the poet naïvely betrays the depth of his own feeling when he demands that the

victims, too, shall see the tables turned. When an Oriental receives a present, he loosens a fold in his copious robes, and places it therein; the gift that Yahweh is asked to lay in the enemy's *bosom* is that of *seven-fold* punishment. After all, Israel is the *people*, the *sheep* of God, and, if they can see their desire on their adversaries, they will hymn the praises of their saving God as long as man endures upon earth.

### *Religious Teaching*

For religion, the centre of this psalm is the problem which it raises. It makes no attempt at an answer, but is content to plead for a reversal of the conditions. In *v.* 8 the psalmist seems to hope that God, not man, will make the needed "atonement". An "atonement" is that which restores the right relationship between God and man after it has been broken by human sin. In most religions it is made from the human side—*e.g.*, through the use of sacrificial blood by the Jewish priests. The psalmist, however, seems to foreshadow the specifically Christian thought that a valid reunion between a holy God and a sinful man can be effected only when the initiative is taken by God himself.

### PSALM 80

As in Psalms 78 and 79, so here, we have a cry of distress, a national lament. The situation, however, is not that of the two preceding pieces. Each of them originally contemplated a single catastrophic event, though in neither case can we be certain as to what that event was. Ps. 80, on the other hand, reflects a condition more or less permanent, a desolate state which has long been in existence, and which promises no immediate change except through the direct intervention of Yahweh. It seems to refer to northern Israel, for Ephraim and Benjamin are expressly mentioned, while *v.* 17 seems to contain a play on the latter name. It is true that in *v.* 1 Yahweh is described as seated on the cherubim. We know that this phrase would be quite suitable to the Jerusalem Temple, and on this ground some commentators have been led to conclude that the psalm belongs to the south, and not to the north. But we do not know that cherubim were absent from all the northern sanctuaries, and it is at least probable that they were in many places an element in the Yahweh mythology. Generally speaking, the conditions may be those of northern Israel after 721 B.C., as described in II Kings 17<sup>26</sup>—note especially the reference to wild beasts in *v.* 13.

The structure of the psalm is interesting. A refrain appears in *vv.* 3, 7, and 19; in each of the two former cases it is preceded by three lines of verse. An abbreviated form is found again in *v.* 14,

and it is natural to suppose that a similar line once stood after *v.* 10. The fact that *vv.* 8–13 all deal with the same subject is not a fatal objection. Complete symmetry, however, cannot be secured merely by inserting the same refrain before or after *v.* 16, since 14b–19 contain only five lines instead of six. If, then, the poem was written in fully strophic form, either a line in addition to the refrain has dropped out, or two extra lines have been inserted; the former would seem to be the more probable hypothesis, since none of the existing verses appears intrusive. The omission (if it took place) was probably after *v.* 16. It remains to add that in all extant forms of the text the latter half of *v.* 15 is nearly identical with the latter half of *v.* 17. Probably in one place or the other some words dropped out in the process of transmission, and the gap was filled from the other verse.

This psalm contains certain evidence of the substitution of Elohim for Yahweh. The phrase *אלהים צבאות* is grammatically impossible, whilst *יהוה צבאות* is a common contraction for *יהוה אלהי צבאות*. The presence of the Tetragrammaton in *vv.* 4 and 19 is to be explained on grounds of textual corruption at a comparatively late stage.

Metre 3 : 3, with 2 : 2 : 2 in *v.* 9.

*For the Precentor : Of Šošananim. 'Eduth. Asaph's. A Psalm.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 (2). O Shepherd of Israel, give ear,<br>Thou that sittest on the Cherubim,<br>shine forth<br>° And from slumber ° arouse thy<br>valour, | that leddest Joseph as a flock.<br><br>2 (3). before Ephraim and Benjamin.<br><br>and come for our salvation. |
| 3 (4). O God ° of Hosts °, restore us,<br><br>4 (5). °° O God of Hosts, how long !  | and lighten thy face that we may be<br>saved,<br><br>Thou hast fumed at the prayer of thy<br>people,          |
| 5 (6). ° Thou hast fed us with bread of<br>tears,   | ° and has made us drink ° tears by large<br>measure.  |
| 6 (7). Thou makest us a strife to our<br>neighbours,  | while our foes mock at us.  |
| 7 (8). O God of Hosts, restore us,  | and lighten thy face that we may be<br>saved.   |
| 8 (9). Thou movedst a vine from Egypt,  | drivedst out nations and plantedst it.  |
| 9 (10). Thou madest level ground before it,<br>and didst firmly root it,<br>and it filled the land.                                       |   |
| 10 (11). Its shadow ° covered ° mountains,<br>° O God of Hosts, restore us,   | and its bosage cedars of God.<br>and lighten thy face that we may be<br>saved.°                               |
| 11 (12). It sent forth its boughs to the Sea,   | and unto the River its tendrils.  |
| 12 (13). Why brakest thou down its fences ?   | that all passing the road may pluck it.   |
| 13 (14). The boar from the forest ° may<br>trample it °,  | and wild creatures feed upon it.  |
| 14 (15). O God of Hosts ° restore us,   | and lighten thy face that we may be<br>saved °.   |
| Look from heaven and see,<br>15 (16). ° And the garden ° thy right hand<br>planted,   | and visit this vine.<br><br>° °   |

- 16 (17). 'Tis burned with fire ° and up-  
rooted °,  
° O God of Hosts, restore us,      at the rebuke of thy face ° it perisheth °.  
and lighten thy face that we may be  
saved.°
- 
- 17 (18). Be thy hand on the man of thy      on the man thou madest strong for  
right hand,      thyself.
- 18 (19). And we will not turn back from      if thou revive us we will call on thy  
thee,      name.
- 19 (20). ° ° O God of Hosts, restore us,      and lighten thy face that we may be  
saved.

### Text-critical Notes

2. Read *וְיִמָּשְׁכֶּה* for "and Manasseh". 3. Insert, with S, *יְבָרֵאֵהוּ*, as elsewhere in the refrain. 4. Om. "Yahweh". 5. Read, with G, *וְהִאֲכִילֵנוּ* and *וְהִתְשַׁקֵּנוּ* for "... them". 10. Read, with G, *נִסְתָּה* for "were covered". Insert refrain, with Briggs, as in *vs.* 3, 7, and 19. 13. Read *וְיִרְמָסֶנָּה* for *וְיִרְמָסֶנָּה* (?) 14. Read refrain, with Briggs, as in *vs.* 3, 7, and 19, for "O God of Hosts, return". 15. Read, with Graetz, *וְיִנְכֶּה* for *וְיִנְכֶּה* (?). Om. "and on the man thou madest strong for thyself" (see introduction to the psalm). 16. Read, with G, *וְיִכְבִּיחֶהָ*, inserting "and". Read *וְהִאֲבִיד* for "they perish".

For the title, see Vol. I, pp. 16, 18.

The opening stanza of this psalm (1-3) is a simple plea for help, starting with the familiar metaphor of the *Shepherd* God. With characteristic Hebrew liveliness, the picture changes, and Yahweh is seen seated *on the cherubim*, those strange composite creatures of ancient myth and art. His *valour* is beyond question, but now it *slumbers*; on no other ground can the poet account for Yahweh's inaction. The refrain, to be repeated at regular intervals by the worshipping community, is an appeal to God to *lighten his face*. The metaphor of light and darkness is readily applied to the favour or displeasure shown in a man's expression. A cheerful, kindly look is naturally light, while a frown is darkness.

The idea of the refrain is taken up at once with the beginning of stanza II (4-7). *How long!* is here, as in many other places, an ejaculation rather than a question, and the psalmist at once complains that the *prayer* of God's *people* has been answered with the dark look, not with the light; the divine countenance has been blackened with the murky cloud of smoke rising from the fire of anger—a striking development of the familiar image. *Tears* to eat, and *tears* to drink have been Israel's portion, offered in great vessels such as those in which God once measured out the dust of the earth (Isa. 40<sup>12</sup>). The nation has been an object of strife (cf. Jer. 15<sup>10</sup>), a butt for all the cruelty and *mockery* of their quarrelsome *foes*. So once more the listening congregation lifts up the refrain.

With stanza III (8-10) the poet introduces yet another metaphor—that of the vine. Again we have a common image, for as the sheep demanded more care than any other domestic animal, so the vine needed

more continuous attention and careful protection than any other product of the ground. The seed had been sown in *Egypt*, whence Israel had been transplanted to a land whose soil had been already *levelled* and prepared by the *driving out* of nations settled there. We note the theory of history presented by the later elements in the book of Joshua. *Planted* in its new home, the vine had flourished greatly and *covered mountains*, and even the wild *cedars*.

Stanza IV (11-14a) starts where stanza III ends, and figures the vine spreading from the Mediterranean *sea* to the *river* Euphrates. But now comes the contrast between the glorious past and the miserable present. The *fences*—"dry" walls built of stones cleared from the soil—have been torn down, and the vine is exposed to the ravages of man and beast. Curiously enough, damage done by the wild *boar* is mentioned only here in the Bible, though it must have been only too familiar to ancient Israel.

A renewed plea for deliverance naturally follows in stanza V (14b-16), based in the first instance on the ground that it is Yahweh's *right hand* that *has planted* the vine and the surrounding *garden*. This section seems to have suffered in course of transmission, but its general purpose is clear. Apparently it has been telescoped into stanza VI (17-19), where the final appeal is made. Here there is a delicate play on Benjamin, the "son of the *right hand*", and the psalm closes with a promise of fidelity and devotion if deliverance is granted. The language of the last clause, with its condition, *if thou revive us again*, recalls the ancient liturgical formula preserved in Hosea 6<sup>2</sup>.

### *Religious Teaching*

As in all psalms of this type, there is little explicit presentation of doctrine. The psalmist is convinced of Yahweh's special relation to Israel, and of his care manifested in the past. He cannot believe in the final desertion of the people, and pleads that the power of Yahweh, which he does not for an instant doubt, will be once more revealed in the restoration of his chosen race. It is true that calamity has befallen the nation, that it seems as if Yahweh had answered the appeal of his people only with fresh outbursts of wrath. A problem thus arises, for the poet is not conscious of any wrong-doing which might explain the divine anger. Others, like the author of *Job*, would be tortured by the problem; others again would admit that they might have sinned unawares. But this poet is one who feels rather than thinks; unlike so many of the Psalmists, he does not seek for "the root of the matter" in himself, and he can simply turn back to the Shepherd of Israel with his faith unshaken, and be sure that in the end all will be well.

## PSALM 81

THIS psalm, in the form in which it has come down to us, presents several puzzling features. It opens with all the exultation of a hymn of praise, apparently to be sung at some festival. The exact occasion is disputed; the new moon, the full moon, and the "festival" are all mentioned in *v.* 3, with special stress on the blowing of trumpets. The last feature suggests New Year's Day, on which it is still used as a proper psalm, the special term "festival", implying a season of pilgrimage, one of the three great occasions, Tabernacles, Passover, or Weeks. If the psalm be pre-exilic, the former is the more probable, if post-exilic, then the second: Kittel's note on *vv.* 1-3, which would apply to any of these occasions, is worth quoting in full: "The community is gathered in the forecourt, priests make ready the offering, in the halls about the Temple and at tables in the court preparations for the festal meal are made by the separate clans and groups of celebrants. Through the doors of the great court streams a surging festal throng; ever-fresh hosts of pilgrims and participants approach the altar on which the sacred ritual must be consummated. Into this scene we are transported by the rousing note of our psalm, which itself was intended to contribute to the glory of the great festival. At once it supplies us with an illuminating picture of the lyric element in such festivals; the court re-echoes with the joy and exultation of the festal crowd (cf. Lam. 2<sup>7</sup>). At intervals hymns ring out, sung by priestly choirs, often, as we know, by appointed individuals, accompanied by zither, lute and harp. Elsewhere cymbals control the rhythm of worshippers moving in stately procession or pacing round the altar, and when the sacrifice is burned, the priests make their ram's horns heard in solemn, hollow tones, to tell even distant worshippers that the sacred rite has been consummated."

With this vivid picture before us, we can see the function of our psalm. Its place is near the beginning of the ritual, and its purpose is to remind the worshippers of the ancient law, "Thou shalt worship Yahweh thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". So much is clear. But suddenly, between *v.* 10 and *v.* 11, the tone changes. It is no longer exultation; it is a condemnation of Israel for national apostasy, and ends with a reference to the blessings the nation might have enjoyed had it only been faithful.

It is not surprising that several modern commentators are unable to accept the psalm as a unity without drastic alteration. There seems to be no motive for the third clause in *v.* 10, and it looks as if parts of two psalms had been telescoped into one another. Nor does *v.* 16 offer a natural conclusion; 10c-16 has every appearance of being a fragment attached to a psalm whose true conclusion has not been preserved.



There is nothing in either part which suggests a post-exilic date. The opening passage may be quite early; the rest of the first part, though now organically united with it, suggests the age of the great prophets. The language of *v.* 12 strongly suggests that the second part comes from the end of the seventh century B.C., as the word for "stubbornness" occurs elsewhere only in *Deuteronomy* (once) and *Jeremiah* (eight times). If we had to guess an occasion to which both parts were generally adapted, the best conjecture would be Josiah's great Passover celebration. Even so, we should have to remember that parts of the psalm, at any rate, have a much longer tradition behind them, and may have been used on a variety of occasions.

Metre: 3:3, with 3:3:3 in 5c-6 (6c-7) and 10c-11 (11c-12), possibly both due to mutilation. במעוזותיהם in *v.* 13 counts as two units.

*For the Precentor : On Gittith. Asaph's.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 (2). Break out praise to God our<br>fortress!   | shout aloud to the God of Jacob!            |
| 2 (3). Lift up harp-song and play the<br>timbrel, | sweet lyre with lute.                       |
| 3 (4). Ring the new-moon blast on the<br>horn,    | at the full moon on our festal day.         |
| 4 (5). For an ordinance in Israel is it,          | a decree of the God of Jacob.               |
| 5 (6). A testimony he appointed in<br>Joseph,     | when he came ° from the land of °<br>Egypt. |

The voice of one I know not do I hear—

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 6 (7). "I have freed ° thy shoulder ° from the burden,<br>° thy hands ° have done with the basket.             |  |
| 7 (8). In affliction thou calledst and I delivered thee,<br>I answered thee in the secret home of the thunder, | I assayed thee at the waters of Meribah.         |
| 8 (9). Hear my people, and let me testify<br>to thee,  | O Israel, if thou wilt hearken to me.            |
| 9 (10). There shall be no strange god in<br>thee,  | nor shalt thou bow to a foreign god.             |
| 10 (11). I am Yahweh, thy God,   | that brought thee up from the land of<br>Egypt." |

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 11 (12). But my people obeyed not my<br>voice,                       | open wide thy mouth that I may fill it.                                       |
| 12 (13). ° So I let them go ° in the<br>stubbornness of their heart, | and Israel showed me no good will.  |
| 13 (14). Would my people ° were hearken-<br>ing ° to me,             | they should walk in their own desires.  |
| 14 (15). Soon would I subdue their<br>enemies,                       | Israel were walking in my ways!<br>and over their foes bring back my<br>hand. |
| 15 (16). ° They that hate them ° would<br>come cringing ° to them °, | ° and their terror ° would be for ever.                                       |
| 16 (17). ° But I would feed them ° with<br>the cream of the wheat,   | and with honey from the rock ° would I<br>sate them °.                        |

*Text-critical Notes*

5. Read, with G, מֵאֶרֶץ for "upon the land of". 6. Read, with Duhm, שָׁכַמָּה and בְּזָרְיָה for "his shoulder" and "his hands". 12. Read מִן הַשְׁלָחָה for "so I let him go". 13. Read, with Buhl, שָׁמַע for שָׁמַע. 15. Read שִׁנְאֵיהֶם for "they that hate Yahweh". Read לְמִי for "him". Read, with S, בְּעֶרְיָהֶם for "their time". 16. Read (cf. Houbigant) וְהֵאֱכִילָם for "and he fed him". Read (cf. G) אֲשַׁבֵּיָם for "would I sate thee".

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 13.

The great assembly of worshippers stands silent in the forecourt of the Temple. A priest stands out and leads the call to exultant song and prayer. All the instruments of music (see under Ps. 150, pp. 589 ff.) ring out their notes of gladness, and the opening of the solemn festival—*new moon* or *full moon* or some other—is proclaimed. The constituent authority for the celebration is none other than *the God of Jacob*, who has long since promulgated his *ordinance* and *decree*—"Israel" may well be a contracted phrase for "the God of Israel".

The word passes to a prophet, who speaks in the name of Yahweh. He, too, cites his authority; it is not that of ancient prescription, but of direct personal communication. A *voice* is in his ears, and the speaker is no familiar human acquaintance, but one whom he does *not know*; it can be no other than Yahweh. The divine message begins with an appeal to the distant past, to the days when Israel's *shoulder* still bore the Egyptian *burden*, and his *hands* still carried the *basket*—one of the most familiar of the "coolie's" instruments. The well-known story is swiftly summed up in a few telling words—the *call*, the *deliverance*, the revelation amid the crashing storms of Sinai, where it seems as if the *thunder* had its *secret home*, the *assaying* of Israel (a curious inversion of the usual picture) at the waters of Meribah. Here, it seems, there is a gap—silence or words accidentally omitted—before the actual demand is made. The language and spirit are those of *Deuteronomy*, and the supreme lesson is that it is Yahweh, and Yahweh alone, who must be worshipped by Israel.

At this point (10c) the whole tone and purport of the poem change, and we feel instinctively that we are in a totally different atmosphere. Yahweh is still speaking, yet his next words, offering to *fill* the *open mouth* of his people, involve a transition too abrupt even for the Hebrew mind. If this be a part of the same piece as *vv.* 1-10b, it is surely clear that some introductory words have fallen out before 10c. For this is what Yahweh would have said to his people if they had been faithful, and the verses that follow are a divine lament over Israel's refusal to accept his gifts. This is hardly consistent with the festal note of the preceding verse, especially if the occasion be the Feast of Tabernacles or Passover. The great tragedy is that the people would not *obey* the *voice* of Yahweh, and left him no alternative but to *let them go*, dismiss them altogether from association with him. If only they had *hearkened to him*, and *walked in his ways*, they would have known victory instead of defeat, and it would have been their enemies who would have been *subdued* and *come cringing to them*, living for all time lives of *terror*. Israel, on the other hand, would have had the best of fare, *the cream of the wheat*—the Hebrew word is "fat", used in just the same metaphorical way as our "cream"—and abundance of

wild honey. And there the poem breaks off—surely not its natural conclusion.

### *Religious Teaching*

Even if this psalm be not a structural unity, it has a single lesson. Absolute and unwavering fidelity and consecration to the one living and true God is the indispensable condition of success and prosperity. While human experience belies the doctrine on the lower planes, in the highest sense it still remains, and ever must remain, profoundly true.

## PSALM 82

THIS psalm, like Ps. 58, presents the reader with an interesting problem. It speaks of certain "gods", whose function is to act as judges of men, and condemns them for their failure to use their authority aright. Who are they? The traditional interpretation, going back to the Targum, is that they are human judges, and two or three passages, of which Exod. 21<sup>6</sup> is the best example, are cited in support of this view. But it is now generally recognized that in all these passages the word "God" is to be taken in its normal sense. Another theory is that they are simply the heathen gods, or, more specifically, the guardian spirits assigned by Yahweh to the various nations. Such subordinate deities are referred to in Dt. 32<sup>8</sup> (Septuagint), 29<sup>26 (25)</sup>, Isa. 24<sup>21</sup>, and a similar doctrine is found both in Ecclus. 17<sup>17</sup>, and in connexion with the "princes of the kingdoms" in Dan. 10<sup>13, 20, 21</sup>, where Michael is named as the "prince" of Israel. On the whole, some such explanation as this best fits the psalm. Yahweh is the supreme ruler of the universe, but deposes his authority to inferior gods. Their government is so unjust that they must be deposed, reduced to the rank of men, and suffer in the end the penalty of death.

The little psalm is regular in form, the lines falling into pairs. V. 5 seems to have little to do with the rest of the poem, and is best regarded as an accidental insertion due to one or more marginal notes. V. 8 is the exclamation of a pious reader, easily attached to the end.

There is no indication of date, but the passages quoted show that the thought is not necessarily early, having survived in some form from pre-exilic times well into the second century B.C.

Metre: 3 : 3 ; of the two intrusive verses, v. 5 is 2 : 2 : 2 (possibly 4 : 3), and v. 8 is 4 : 3.

### *A Psalm. Asaph's.*

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. God is set in the divine council,     | in the midst of the gods he judgeth. |
| 2. How long will ye judge unrighteously, | and lift up the face of the wicked ? |
|  | Selah.                               |



subject to mortality, so they must perish and share the lot of all mankind, commoners and princes alike. Finally, the psalm ends with an appeal by the worshippers (probably later than the original poem), asking Yahweh to dismiss all these lower beings, and rule the world directly himself.

### *Religious Teaching*

The psalmist has not yet attained to a full and complete monotheism. But his position is nevertheless interesting and important. It shows a way in which the thought of Israel passed from polytheism (monolatrous though it may have been) to a real belief in the one God. The other gods are first relegated to a lower rank, in which they are subject to mortality (we may compare the old legend of the death of Pan), and then, finally, disappear altogether. It may be recalled that in the Ras Shamra texts we have the death of Baal and Aleyan. There may be also an attempt to explain the inequality of human fate, and so to give some kind of answer to the question first propounded by Habakkuk and Jeremiah, "Why lookest thou on . . . while the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he?" (Hab. 1<sup>13</sup>, cf. Jer. 12<sup>1ff.</sup>). The failure of justice is due to the fact that the world has been placed in charge of fallible and unprincipled governors, and if only Yahweh would remove them and rule directly, all would be well. It is true that the psalmist has only pushed the problem one step farther back, but he and others of his time may have been relieved by this attempted solution of the greatest problem which an ethical monotheism has to face.

### PSALM 83

THIS psalm is a national lament, composed for a time of peril, when a coalition of the surrounding nations was threatening the very existence of Israel. Curiously enough, it occurs in ancient Jewish rituals as one of the psalms proper for the Passover feast. No fewer than ten peoples are mentioned; the most prominent appear to be Moab and Ammon (v. 8), but Edom, Philistia and Tyre are also mentioned, together with a number of Bedawin tribes and "Assyria". Damascus is a significant omission. The psalmist recalls two great events in the distant past: the victory of Deborah, and the overthrow of the Midianites by Gideon. He calls down on his people's immediate foes an imprecation based on the fate of these ancient invaders, and prays that the new enemies may be utterly routed.

This is one of the psalms for which a Maccabæan date has been most confidently claimed by a series of scholars, with Theodore of Mopsuestia at their head. For reasons against this view, see Vol. I, pp. 68 ff; in its favour is the fact that six of the ten peoples mentioned

in vv. 6-8 were included in a coalition formed against Judas Maccabæus (I Macc. 5), together with the common use of the name "Assyria" for Syria in the later literature. On the other hand, there was a Bedawin tribe bearing the same name, mentioned in Gen. 25<sup>3</sup> as descended from Abraham by Keturah, and therefore allied to Ishmael.

A combined attack on Jehoshaphat is recorded in II Chron. 20; there, as here, the leaders are Moab and Ammon. Nehemiah, again, was the object of concerted acts of hostility, and some commentators refer the psalm to the age of Artaxerxes Ochus. We must, however, face the possibility that vv. 6-8 form no part of the original psalm, since the catalogue of nations is by no means necessary for the progress of its thought. It may well have been inserted to adapt an older and more general poem to a definite situation. But in this, as in so many other cases, an attempt at exact dating can be little more than a precarious conjecture.

The structure is simple; though *Selah* appears at the end of v. 8, there is no sign of genuine strophic arrangement. The text is, on the whole, well preserved.

The metre is 3 : 3; vv. 6 and 17, 3 : 2. Anacrusis appears in v. 4 (5) על־צפוניך (v. 3) and ובסופתך (v. 15) count as two units each.

*A Song. A Psalm. Asaph's.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 (2). O God, let no rest be thine,   | be not silent nor still, O God.                        |
| 2 (3). For behold, thy foes roar in tumult,                                   | and they that hate thee lift up their head.            |
| 3 (4). Against thy people they take crafty counsel,                           | and plot against thy treasured ones.                   |
| 4 (5). They say :<br>Come, and let us destroy them<br>that they be no people, | let Israel's name be remembered no more.               |
| 5 (6). For they have planned in their heart together,                         | against thee have they made a covenant.                |
| 6 (7). Tents of Edom and Ishmaelites,   | Moab and Hagarites,                                    |
| 7 (8). Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,  | Philistia, with the dwellers in Tyre.                  |
| 8 (9). Yea, Assyria is confederate with them,                                 | and hath become an arm to Lot's sons.<br><i>Selah.</i> |
| 9 (10). Deal with them ° ° as with Sisera,                                    | as with Jabin at Kishon's torrent.                     |
| 10 (11). (Which) were destroyed at Endor,                                     | dung they became for the ground.                       |
| 11 (12). ° As Midian ° make their princes,                                    | as Oreb and Zeeb ° ° their chieftains.                 |
| 12 (13). Who said, Let us take for ourselves                                  | the ° holy ° homestead of God.                         |
| 13 (14). O my God, make them as thistle-down,                                 | as chaff before the wind.                              |
| 14 (15). As when fire kindleth in the forest,                                 | as when flame blazeth on the hills,                    |
| 15 (16). So pursue them with thy storm-wind,                                  | and with thy hurricane confound them.                  |
| 16 (17). Fill their faces with contempt,                                      | and let them seek thy name, O Yahweh.                  |
| 17 (18). Let them be ashamed and confounded for ever,                         | yea, let them be dismayed and perish !                 |
| 18 (19). And let them know that thou alone                                    | art Most High over all the earth.                      |

*Text-critical Notes*

9. Trs. "Midian" to the beginning of v. 11. 11. See on v. 9. Read, with G, שִׁיתָה; M adds "them". Om., with Buhl, "Zebah and Zalmunna". 12. Insert (cf. G), לָךְשׁ. 18. Om., with Duhm, "thy name is Yahweh".

The first verse of the psalm is an appeal to Yahweh to come himself and make his power felt. The writer pleads that he will break the stillness, the *quiet* that surrounds him. There are enemies about (2-5), and they, at least, are making themselves felt and heard. Can God be *silent* when his *foes roar in tumult*, howling like an infuriated mob, and *lifting their head* like a wild beast as it roars? Unlike the animals, these enemies have intelligence, and are *crafty* in their *plotting* against the nation which God has *treasured*, and kept safe in his own hiding-place. They would *destroy Israel*, so that it should cease to be a *people* altogether.

6-8 give a list of the hostile nations. A settled people, *Edom*, *Moab*, or *Ammon*, is followed by a wilder Bedawin tribe, *Ishmael*, *Hagar*, *Amalek*. *Gebal*, too, is almost certainly not Byblos, but a nomad clan mentioned by Eusebius as ranging over territory in the region of Petra. *Philistines* and *Phoenicians* are involved, perhaps, as slave-traders who disposed of Jewish captives, and, in spite of the apparent prominence accorded to them, the Assyrians also may be a wilderness tribe (see above).

With 9 begins the imprecation. Both in blessing and in cursing, a recognized method was to cite instances of supreme happiness or misery, and pray that their fate might also be that of the object of curse or blessing. So the psalmist goes back to two stories in the book of *Judges*. The one is that of *Sisera* and *Jabin*, crushed by the Israelite levies under Deborah and Barak. The mention of Jabin shows that the psalmist knew the story as told in Judg. 4, though instead of Mt. Tabor he mentions the town of Endor, situated almost at its foot. The other event is the overthrow of the *Midianites* by Gideon, and the slaughter of their *princes*, *Oreb* and *Zeeb*. There is no reference in the story of *Judges* to any attempt by the Midianites to *possess* the *homestead* (the word might mean also "pasture") of *God*, unless we are to take the phrase as meaning the land of Israel in general, which is improbable. Now that the country is once more attacked from the outside, may the new invaders share the fate of their ancient predecessors!

13-15 continue with more direct imprecation. The poet prays that the enemy may become as *thistle-down*. This, however, is not an exact rendering of the Hebrew word, which properly means a "rolling thing", and probably indicates the dried heads of a common Palestinian weed, a wild artichoke, which ". . . throws out numerous branches of equal size and length in all directions, forming a sort of sphere or globe, a foot or more in diameter. When ripe and dry in the autumn, these branches become rigid and light as a feather, the parent stem breaks off at the ground, and the wind carries these vegetable globes whithersoever it pleaseth" (W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, p. 212 (1881)). Another metaphor is drawn from destruction wrought

by *fire in forest and on mountain*, or, perhaps, from the speed with which the flames are hurried along by the *storm-wind* and the *hurricane*.

The closing verses (16-18) add a note which tends to mitigate the vindictiveness of the psalm in general. The aim of the psalmist, according to them, is not the annihilation of the enemies, but their conversion. They are to feel the *contempt* to which their calamities will expose them, but only that they may *seek the name* of Yahweh; the purpose of all that happens to them is that they may *know* that the God of Israel *alone* is the *Most High over all the earth*. It is difficult to avoid the impression that this final paragraph is an afterthought, perhaps even a later addition, modifying the severity which offended the spiritual taste of the better minds in Israel.

### *Religious Teaching*

Apart from the last verses, the psalm is almost purely vindictive imprecation. Christian and later Jewish feeling could not endorse its sentiments without a sacrifice of principle. But, if we cannot approve, we may understand; if we had been where the psalmist was, we might well have felt and spoken as he did.

### PSALM 84

THE great autumn festival is at hand. The long year's toil in field and vineyard is over, the produce of the land is gathered in, and the cycle is about to begin once more with solemn ritual and stately ceremony. The ground is parched, and all the *wadis* are dry, but the summer is nearly at an end, and almost before the feast is over the autumn rains may be expected, to soften the earth and make it once more fit for husbandry. From every village in the country comes a train of pilgrims, and as they draw near to their journey's end they sing a song like this.

The psalm has a regular strophic form, each of its three stanzas containing six lines. At the close of the first two we find the word *Selah* (vv. 4 and 8); after the third comes an isolated line (v. 12). It is tempting to suggest that this is a refrain, which is intended to be sung after vv. 4 and 8 as well. In the first stanza the pilgrims dwell on the happiness of those who can make their permanent home in the sanctuary, in the second they contemplate the journey now nearly completed, and in the third they pray for divine help and protection, especially for the king on whose well-being their prosperity will largely depend.

The psalm almost certainly dates from pre-exilic days, and is to be connected with the group which belong to the ceremonial of the Feast



of Tabernacles (see Vol. I, pp. 49 f.), though it clearly did not form a part of the actual ceremonial. It is interesting to note that the Tetragrammaton occurs more often than is usual in psalms belonging to this section of the Psalter.

Metre : 3 : 2, with 2 : 2 in *vv.* 6b, 11, and 2 : 3 in *v.* 12.

*For the Precentor : On Gittith. Of the Sons of Korah. A Psalm.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 (2). How lovely are thy dwellings,       | O Yahweh of hosts !                       |
| 2 (3). My soul longeth, ° yea °, fainteth  | for Yahweh's courts.                      |
| 3 (4). Yea, the sparrow hath found a       | (to greet) the living God.                |
| house,                                     | and the swallow her nest,                 |
| Where she hath laid her brood—             | Yahweh of Hosts. ° °                      |
| thine altars,                              | they praise thee ° for ever. ° Selah.     |
| 4 (5). Blessed are the dwellers in thy     | ° who love pilgrimage °.                  |
| house ;                                    | a fountain they make it.                  |
| 5 (6). Blessed are men whose strength is   | the early rain covereth it.               |
| in thee,                                   | ° they shall see God ° in Zion.           |
| 6 (7). They pass through the Vale of       | hear my prayer !                          |
| Balsams,                                   | ° my king and my God °. Selah.            |
| ° With pools of ° blessing                 | and behold the face of thine Anointed.    |
| 7 (8). They go from strength to strength,  | than a thousand ° in my own chamber °.    |
| 8 (9). Yahweh, God of Hosts,               | than a home in wicked tents.              |
| Give ear, O God of Jacob,                  | is Yahweh, our God ;                      |
| 9 (10). Look to our Shield, O God,         | doth Yahweh give ;                        |
| 10 (11). For a day in thy courts is better | from them that walk in perfection.        |
| To haunt the threshold of                  | blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. |
| Yahweh's house,                            |   |
| 11 (12). For a sun and a shield            |   |
| Grace and glory                            |   |
| He withholdeth no good                     |   |
| 12 (13). O Yahweh of Hosts,                |   |

#### Text-critical Notes

2. Read, with G,  $\text{וְגַם}$  for "and also". 3. Trs. "my king and my God" to end of *v.* 8. 4. Read, with G,  $\text{עַד עַד}$  for "still". 5. Read, with G,  $\text{מַעְלֹת בְּלִבָּבָם}$  for "high ways in their heart". 6. Read, (cf. Schlögl)  $\text{וְגַם}$  for "also". 7. Read (cf. G and Kittel)  $\text{וְיֵאֵרָא}$  for "shall appear unto God". 8. See on *v.* 4. 10. Read with Gunkel,  $\text{בְּיָמֵי}$  for "I have chosen".

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 13.

The psalm, as has been pointed out, falls into three equal parts. 1-4 form a meditation on the beauty of the *dwellings* of *Yahweh*, and on the privileges enjoyed by those who can make the sanctuary their permanent home. The poet is stirred by intense emotion as he thinks of this *lovely* and lovable place. So deep is the *longing* of his *soul* that his heart for a moment fails ; he *fainteth*, his face grows pale, and it seems as if the tension of his spirit would strain the very cords of life. Then comes the swift revulsion ; once more the blood rushes through its accustomed channels, and his whole being, *heart and flesh*, *break*, as it were, into a sudden exultant shout of joy at the thought that he will soon enter the presence of *the living God*. The language of 3 suggests that the temple, like some modern mosques, was sanctuary for the

wild things, and he envies the very *sparrows* and *swallows* which have made their *nests* about the *altar*.

Such bliss as that of the *dwellers* in Yahweh's *house* is not to be had by every man. Yet there is a profound value in pilgrimage, and the second part of the poem starts where the first ended, with *blessedness*. It may not be of such high quality as that enjoyed by the permanent resident in Yahweh's home, but, nevertheless, he who *loveth pilgrimage* (literally "hath pilgrimage in his heart"), who plans and carries out the sacred journey, does make Yahweh his *strength*, and so wins a *blessing*. Further, there is some mystic virtue attached to the pilgrim. He is not merely blessed in himself, he is a channel of blessing to others, and serves as a vehicle of divine mercy. When, for instance, he passes through a dry valley where only the *balsam* tree will grow (2 Sam. 5<sup>22</sup> <sup>a</sup> suggest that there may have been such a valley to the south-west of Jerusalem, through which some pilgrim route would almost certainly lie), doubly parched by the long summer drought, the face of the land changes. *Rain* falls, and springs rise from the ground, over whose surface the pools spread like a veil. They are *pools of blessing*, for water is one of the supreme blessings of Eastern life. In fact, the word used here, with a slight vowel modification, would mean "pool", as, perhaps, in Judg. 1<sup>15</sup>, while in Arabic a word from the same root is used to indicate rain. So, thinks the psalmist, the pilgrim goes, receiving and transmitting blessing, for he is bent on *seeing* his *God*. In this spirit he can offer the *prayer* with which the third part of the poem begins.

The last section proper occupies 9-11. After all, the Feast of Tabernacles, with its mimic presentation of the divine war that led to creation, and of the marriage, death and resurrection of the life-giving deity, had a practical object. Its purpose was to secure the fertility of the land for the coming year. Closely bound up with national prosperity was the welfare of the king, who was both the *Anointed* of Yahweh and the *Shield* of his people. This request once made—the time is not yet come for more extensive petition; that is reserved for the festival itself—the psalmist reverts to the theme with which he started, and once more contemplates the bliss of being in the sanctuary. He is a pilgrim, and must make his way home again all too soon, but even if he had only a *day* instead of a week to spend in Yahweh's *courts*, he would gain something which a *thousand* days in his *own chamber* could not supply. Though, for some reason, he were unable to enter the sacred precinct itself, and passed no farther than the *threshold*, being compelled to behave like a "hanger-on" at the gate, he would still be better off than if he had an assured standing and a permanent position in a godless community. Both in what Yahweh is—a *sun* to give light and a *shield* to protect—and in what he gives—*grace*, *glory*, and *good*—

the man who *walks in perfection* will find abundant reason for exclaiming, in the words of 12, "*O Yahweh of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*"

### *Religious Teaching*

This hymn is a triumphant expression of the blessedness which is to be found in communion with Yahweh. Our conception of religion, its methods and its purposes, has grown during the centuries. Material prosperity is no longer the sole test of divine favour, nor do we think of the welfare of the community as summed up in the life of its individual head. But it is still true that the highest bliss known to the human spirit is the sense of communion with God, and that in the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" we have most certainly an experience of that which is unseen and eternal.

### PSALM 85

THREE divisions are clearly marked in this psalm. According to the usual interpretation, vv. 1-3 (2-4) refer to the return from the Babylonian Captivity; the nation's sins, for which the Exile was the punishment, are forgiven, the divine wrath is assuaged, and the land is restored to Yahweh's favour. This section, therefore, refers to the past; the restoration of the people has taken place. In the second division, however, vv. 4-7 (5-8), there is a prayer to Yahweh to restore his people, to withdraw his anger, which still rests upon them, so that they may rejoice in him, and that he may have mercy on them, and grant them salvation. This section, therefore, refers to the present; so far from the restoration having taken place, the people stand condemned under the wrath of God. The third division, vv. 8-13 (9-14), tells of a divine message accorded to the psalmist; it depicts a state of righteousness, peace, and happiness in the land; Yahweh himself is among his people. Here again the reference is to the present, but see the exegetical notes on these verses for the force of the tenses.

It should be noted at the outset that the first section cannot possibly refer to the return from the Babylonian Captivity; one has but to read the details of the condition of things in the land after the Return, as given in the books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Haggai*, and *Zechariah* (see the notes under Ps. 126, pp. 515 f.) to realize that this is out of the question. The second section might conceivably refer to the evil plight of the people during the early periods after the Return. But the third section takes us into the domain of the supernatural; the glory of Yahweh is thought of as abiding in the land, and Yahweh himself walks on earth with righteousness and uprightness, personified, before him. It is, thus,

evident that the content of the psalm must be explained on other lines. To grasp its true meaning the first requisite is to recognize that in the opening verse a technical term is used which belongs to the language of the prophets. In the English Version the second half of *v.* 1 (2) is rendered: "Thou hast turned back the captivity of Jacob" (*šabtā š'būth ya 'āqōb*; Jacob is a term of endearment for Israel); this phrase is used by the prophets of the bringing back of the time of primeval happiness, the "Golden Age", a theme which plays an important part in the teaching of the prophets concerning the future. The word translated in the English Version by "captivity" should, according to its technical use by the prophets, be rendered "restoration"—namely, the restoration, or bringing back, of the happy age as at the beginning; an instructive illustration occurs in *Jer.* 33<sup>11</sup>: "I will cause the restoration (*š'būth*) of the earth to return *as at the first* (or, *as in the beginning*, כְּבָרִאִשְׁנָה *k'bari'sōnāh*), saith Yahweh"; in *v.* 7 of the same chapter we have, in connexion with this restoration, the phrase: "I will build them (*i.e.*, re-establish them) *as at the first*" (see also *Jer.* 32<sup>44</sup>, 33<sup>26</sup>, *Ezek.* 39<sup>25</sup>, and elsewhere). The conception was of extra-Israelite origin, but was adopted by the prophets who interpreted it as in reference to the "Messianic Age" (see, *e.g.*, *Am.* 9<sup>14</sup>, *Jer.* 33<sup>14-16</sup>). The whole subject is a very large one, and cannot be further dealt with here.<sup>1</sup>

It is, then, this prophetic conception of the re-establishment, or restoration, of the primeval age of bliss, which is the subject of this psalm; it is, thus, an eschatological psalm.

Further, it must be pointed out that, in describing the happy time of restoration, all the verbs are in the perfect tense, as though a past event were being referred to; it is, presumably, largely owing to this (though see the note on *š'būth* in *v.* 1 [2]) that the first section of the psalm has been explained in reference to the Babylonian Captivity. It must, however, be remembered that in Hebrew the perfect is used "to express facts which are undoubtedly imminent, and, therefore, in the imagination of the speaker, already accomplished (*perfectum confidentiæ*). . . . This use of the perfect occurs most frequently in prophetic language (*perfectum propheticum*). The prophet so transports himself in imagination into the future that he describes the future event as if it had been already seen or heard by him."<sup>2</sup> It is in this sense that the perfects in our psalm must be understood.

As sung in the Temple worship, it is probable that the first section was sung by one voice, section two by the whole congregation, while a different voice sang the last section.

The date of the psalm is impossible to determine; the depressed

<sup>1</sup> See Oesterley, *The Evolution of the Messianic Idea* (1908); Dietrich, טוב שבות *Die eszeitliche Wiederherstellung bei den Propheten* (1925).

<sup>2</sup> Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, Engl. transl. by Cowley, 106 n; pp. 312 f. (1910).

state of the people reflected in the second section is variously applicable; the language is thoroughly classical; were it not that prophetic influence is so often to be observed in post-exilic psalms, we should be inclined to postulate a pre-exilic date, especially as there is nothing in the psalm that points necessarily to post-exilic times. Its position, however, among many post-exilic psalms suggests the later period.

The metre is regular, 3 : 3.

*For the Precentor. Of the Sons of Qorah. A Psalm.*

- |          |  |  |
|----------|--|--|
| 1 (2).   | Thou hast shown favour, Yahweh,<br>to thy land,  | thou hast brought back ° the restoration ° of Jacob;   |
| 2 (3).   | Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of<br>thy people,  | thou hast covered all ° their sins °;<br>Selah.  |
| 3 (4).   | Thou hast withdrawn all thy<br>wrath,  | ° thou hast ceased ° from the fierceness<br>of thine anger.  |
| 4 (5).   | ° Turn now °, O God of our<br>salvation,   | ° and take away ° thine indignation<br>from us °.  |
| 5 (6).   | Wilt thou be angry with us for<br>ever?  | wilt thou prolong thy wrath to all ages ?<br>that thy people may rejoice in thee ?<br>and thy salvation grant unto us.                         |
| 6 (7).   | ° Wilt thou not ° revive us again,   | ° will not Yahweh ° speak peace  |
| 7 (8).   | Show us, Yahweh, thy love,   | ° and to them that turn to him in<br>confidence ? °  |
| 8 (9).   | I would hearken to what ° Yah-<br>weh ° will say,<br>To his people and unto his loved<br>ones, | that ° his glory ° may abide in our land.<br>Righteousness and Peace ° kiss each<br>other °;<br>and Righteousness looketh down from<br>heaven. |
| 9 (10).  | Of a truth, nigh to them that fear<br>him is his salvation,                                    | and our land yieldeth her increase.  |
| 10 (11). | Love and Truth are met together,   | and ° Uprightness ° on the way of his<br>steps.  |
| 11 (12). | Truth sprouteth forth from the<br>earth,   |  |
| 12 (13). | Yea, Yahweh giveth that which is<br>good,  |  |
| 13 (14). | Righteousness goeth before him,  |  |

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Read שְׁבִיתָ following the *K'thib*, not שְׁבִיתָ "captivity" (cp. Dietrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 11 ff. 2. Read, with the Versions, הַפְּאִתָּם for הַפְּאִתָּם "their sin". 3. Read הִשְׁבִּיתָ for הִשְׁבִּיתָ "thou hast caused to turn". 4. Read נָחָם for נָחָם. Read, with G, וְהָסַר for וְהָסַר "and annul". Read מְעַמְּנִי for מְעַמְּנִי "with us". 6. Read הָלֵלָה, omitting אֵתָּה "thou", emphatic, which overloads the half-line, cp. Ps. 71<sup>20</sup>. 8. Add יְהוָה. Read הָלֵלָה יְהוָה for הָלֵלָה יְהוָה "the God Yahweh". Read, with Gunkel, וְאַל יִשְׁבוּ לְבָסְלָה for וְאַל יִשְׁבוּ לְבָסְלָה "and let them not turn again to folly"; for בָּסְלָה in the sense of "confidence" or "hope" see Job 4<sup>6</sup>. 9. Read בְּבוֹדוֹ for בְּבוֹד "glory". 10. Read נִשְׁקִי for נִשְׁקִי "they kiss". 13. Read וַיַּשֶּׁם for וַיַּשֶּׁם "and he maketh".

1-3. The psalmist speaks of the time of perfect happiness in the land because it is blest with Yahweh's favour; the land is called his, *thy land*, a thought which occurs in the prophetic books ("my land", Isa. 14<sup>25</sup>, Jer. 2<sup>7</sup>, Ezek. 36<sup>6</sup>, Joel 1<sup>6</sup>, but not in any other book). What is meant by the *favour* which *Yahweh* has shown is expressed in the words: *thou hast brought back the restoration of Jacob*; the significance of the phrase "to bring back the restoration" (*šûb š'bûth*)

has already been dealt with; the English rendering here given is confessedly *faute de mieux*, but it is not possible to reproduce the Hebrew without a paraphrase. The Hebrew word for "restoration", or "returning", is *š'bûth*; in the verse before us—and the same is true of many other passages in which it occurs—this is the written form of the text; but the marginal reading (*Q'rê*) has *š'bîth*, which means "captivity" and represents what the mediæval Jewish critics held to be the right reading. Which of the two readings is the correct one is further complicated by the question of grammar—viz., there are two roots in Hebrew: *šābāh*, "to take captive", and *šûb*, "to return"; and the derivations from these, respectively, *š'bîth*, "captivity," and *š'bûth*, "restoration," or "returning," are attended by grammatical difficulties; into these we cannot go here. If, therefore, in deciding whether *š'bûth* or *š'bîth* should be read, we had to depend on early Jewish criticism or on Hebrew grammatical points, the difficulty would be wellnigh insoluble. Fortunately, there are other means whereby this can be decided in most cases. Almost always, when read in the light of the context, it becomes clear whether the word should be read *š'bûth* or *š'bîth* (whether, or not, there is a marginal reading). In the case of our present psalm the seer presents us with a picture of an entire obliteration of sins among the people, with the consequent withdrawal of divine wrath; this means that all those things which were always recognized as the signs of God's anger for sin have disappeared; that this cannot conceivably refer to the conditions of land and people as these existed after the return from the Captivity, should be obvious to anyone who reads in the Biblical records what the actual facts were (for details see under Ps. 126). Clearly, we must, therefore, read here *š'bûth*, "restoration," or "returning"—i.e., of the primeval age of bliss—and not *š'bîth*, "captivity" (cp. Ps. 53<sup>7</sup>). The weight of iniquity had crushed down the people, and now the burden had been taken from them; the ghastly horror of sin had lain before them, too horrible a sight for their eyes; now it is hidden, and they can look fearlessly before them. A mass of living wrath had spread over the land, and now it has been gathered and its last trace and remnant swept away; in a word, the fierce heat of Yahweh's anger has been quenched.

In the first section of our psalm, therefore, this apocalypticist, as we might call him, envisages the return of the "Golden Age". With this is contrasted, in the second section (4-7), the present actual state in which the people find themselves; that the reference here is not a general one, but that it tells of some definite period of national calamity, probably famine or drought, see v. 12, may be regarded as certain, for it was just this that called forth the picture of comfort and encouragement contained in the first section; but what the particular time of distress was cannot be determined; it happened too often to

be identified without some definite indication; and this is wanting. As sung in the Temple, this part of the psalm was probably rendered by the congregation collectively. There is, as it were, a contrasting parallelism between this and the preceding section; there we have: "thou hast brought back," or "restored" (*šabtā*); in contrast to this the second section has: "restore" (*šûb-nā*); there the divine anger has all disappeared; here it weighs heavily and is unceasing: *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?* they cry, for there lies before them only a vista of the long-drawn agony *prolonged* by Yahweh's *wrath*, generation after generation *to all ages*. There the entire disappearance of Yahweh's anger has given new life; here there is this plaint: *Wilt thou not revive us again?* This contrasting parallelism is both purposeful and effective, and emphasizes the poetical beauty of the psalm. The threefold pleading in question-form is then followed by a prayer, in direct form, that *Yahweh* would *show* his *love* (*hesed*), and *grant salvation* to his people. Here "salvation" has a meaning different from that in which the Hebrew word is ordinarily used ("deliverance," "rescue," "welfare," "help," according to the context), it means the permanent state of bliss when Yahweh brings back the primeval age of happiness.

8-13. The answer to the prayer is then proclaimed. This section takes the form of a divine oracle. Like the prophets of old, the psalmist listens first for Yahweh's message: *I would hearken to what Yahweh will say*; and in question-form denoting conviction of an affirmative, he asks: *Will not Yahweh speak peace to his people. . . ?* They are called *his loved ones* (*hăsidâyw*), an expression peculiarly characteristic of the *Psalms*, because of their trust and *confidence* in him. Then follows the divine message which has been received. Here the psalmist reverts to the opening theme of the psalm; the verbs are all in the "prophetic perfect"; so certain is he of the fulfilment of his prophecy that he envisages it as already come to pass; and he describes the final state of bliss as present: *salvation* has come, it is *nigh to them that fear him*, cp. Matt. 3<sup>2</sup>, "The Kingdom of heaven hath drawn nigh" (*ἤγγικεν*). Now has come the time when the divine presence, *his glory*, can *abide* permanently in a *land* where all men serve Yahweh in reverential awe; with the whole verse (9) cp. Isa. 51<sup>4-6</sup>, 56<sup>1</sup>, 60<sup>19, 20</sup>. In words as beautiful as any in the Psalter, the psalmist then goes on to describe the result of the divine presence: *Love and truth are met together, righteousness and peace kiss each other*; very striking is the personification of these virtues (cp. Isa. 58<sup>8</sup>); they are, perhaps, thought of as angelic beings, much as Zoroastrianism personified certain divine characteristics as the Amesha Spentas (Archangels). Earth and heaven are, as it were, joined together; from the former *Truth sprouteth forth*, like some beautiful plant (cp. Ps. 72<sup>3</sup>), while from above the windows of heaven are opened earthwards, and *Righteousness looketh down* on an earth

transformed. All things are the gifts of Yahweh, who *giveth that which is good*, the psalmist continues, *and our land yieldeth her increase*. To our ears the mention of this in such an otherwise sublime connexion sounds somewhat incongruous; but it must be remembered that materialistic ideas often find expression in the prophetic pictures of the final restoration (see Isa. 4<sup>2</sup>, 30<sup>23, 24</sup>, Jer. 31<sup>12</sup>, Hos. 2, <sup>21, 22</sup>, Am. 9<sup>13</sup>); purely spiritual conceptions had not yet developed (see the whole of Job 31). The final words of the psalm are very striking; it is not only the sign of Yahweh's presence, *his glory*, that will appear on earth, but he himself will come among his people (cp. Joel 2<sup>27</sup>), preceded by *Righteousness* and *Uprightness*, again personified; with this conception cp. Ps. 89<sup>14</sup>, "Love and truth go before his face," see also Isa. 58<sup>8</sup>. With the thought of God coming to dwell among his people, we recall the words of Rev. 21<sup>3</sup>: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them. . . ."

### *Religious Teaching*

The special interest and importance of the religious teaching of this psalm (and the same applies to Ps. 126) centre in its picture of the time of universal restoration; for this lies behind the more fully developed conceptions and accounts occurring in the apocalyptic literature proper; and these again form the basis of some of the teaching of the early Church on the Second Coming. There are some passages in the book of *Revelation* which should be read in connexion with this psalm (7<sup>2-10</sup>, 14<sup>6, 7</sup>, 21<sup>1-5</sup>). Above all, the reign of righteousness, and the consequent entire abolition of sin, is a conception of extreme beauty, and recalls Rev. 21<sup>1</sup>: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more"; the "sea" here means the embodiment of all evil; it is synonymous with *Tehom*, the primeval monster, "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan" (Rev. 20<sup>2</sup>). The world is foul with sin, crushed by the burden of iniquity. So deeply has it sunk into the morass of evil that nothing but the direct interference of God, a drastic and complete reversal of existing conditions, can ensure amendment. So far the psalmist is at one with all apocalyptic thought. But whereas normal eschatology can envisage only the complete destruction of the present world-order as a preliminary to the new age, the psalmist is strong in the belief that God can heal the universe as it is, and create a new world within the old.



## PSALM 86

PSALM 86 is a cry for help against the writer's enemies. Some expositors regard it as the utterance of the community speaking as an individual, thus illustrating the familiar Israelite doctrine of corporate personality. Others, with more probability, hold it to be an expression of the religious emotion of an individual. In the latter case it might be classed among those psalms which present the legal aspect of the plea of a defendant protesting his innocence and pleading for the divine acquittal, but there are certain terms and phrases (*e.g.*, the reference to miracle in *v.* 10) which are hardly suitable in such circumstances.

In its present form the psalm appears to be late, though it is hopeless to attempt even an approximate dating. Psalms of this kind are particularly likely to have received accretions from time to time, adapting them to the needs of successive generations of suppliants; one or two of these seem fairly obvious. On the other hand, the reference to other gods in *v.* 8 can hardly come from the latest period in Israelite thought. Links with early psalms are not absent; *e.g.*, *v.* 14 is very similar to Ps. 54<sup>3(4)</sup>. It is even possible that portions of two or three psalms of similar tone and purport have been combined to form a single psalm. *Vv.* 6 and 12 open with phrases of a kind commonly used at the beginning of a psalm, but they may have marked simply the start of a new verse-paragraph. If this be so, the inequality of the three parts makes the suggestion of a genuine strophic arrangement improbable, unless we are to suppose that the difference in length as between them is due to additions made during the transmission of the psalm.

The metre is mainly a combination of 2 : 2 and 3 : 2 (or 2 : 3); it is interesting to note that a fairly large proportion of the 2 : 2 lines are genuine "fours", with a caesura and external parallelism. The first and last lines now contain seven stresses each, and the first member of *v.* 16 is an isolated 3; either there has been some interpolation or a couple of significant words have dropped out.

*A Prayer. David's.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Incline, O Yahweh, thine ear and<br>answer me,                | for lowly and poor am I!                                    |
| 2. Guard my life,<br>Save thy servant, ° ° O my God,             | for godly am I,<br>which trusteth in thee.                  |
| 3. Shew me thy favour, Yahweh,                                   | for to thee do I cry all the day.                           |
| 4. Gladden the soul of thy servant,                              | for to thee ° ° do I lift up my soul.                       |
| 5. For thou, O Lord,<br>And plenteous in love                    | art good and forgiving,<br>to all that call upon thee.      |
| 6. Give ear, O Yahweh, to my prayer,                             | and attend to my suppliant voice.                           |
| 7. In the day of my adversity                                    | I will call thee, for thou wilt answer me.                  |
| 8. None is like thee among gods, O<br>Yahweh,                    | nor are any deeds like thine.                               |
| 9. Let all the nations,<br>And let them bow before thee, O Lord, | whom thou hast made, come;<br>and let them honour thy name. |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>10. For great art thou,<br/>Thou, O God,<br/>11. Teach me, Yahweh, thy way ;<br/>May my heart ° rejoice °</p> <p>12. Let me praise thee, O Lord, my God,<br/>And let me honour thy name for ever,<br/>And thou shalt deliver my life<br/>14. O God, the arrogant<br/>And the council of the tyrants<br/>15. Thou, O Lord, art a God<br/>Slow to anger,<br/>16. Turn unto me, and shew me favour,<br/>Give thy strength to thy servant,<br/>17. Shew unto me<br/>And let them that hate me fear and be<br/>ashamed,</p> | <p>and a doer of marvels ;<br/>alone ° art great °.<br/>I will walk in thy truth.<br/>to fear thy name !</p> <p>with all my heart,<br/>13. for great is thy love ° ° ,<br/>from nethermost Sheol.<br/>have risen against me,<br/>seek my life ° ° .<br/>compassionate and gracious,<br/>and great in love and truth.</p> <hr/> <p>and deliver thy handmaid's son.<br/>a token for good,<br/>for thou, O Yahweh, hast helped and<br/>consoled me.</p> |
|---|--|

## Text-critical Notes

2. Om., with G, " thou ". 4. Om., with Jerome " O Lord ". 10. Add, with G, גָּדוֹל. 11. Read, cp. G, S, יִתֵּן for " shall be one ". 13. Om. " upon me ". 14. Om., with Gunkel, " and have not set thee before them "; possibly the whole verse has been inserted from Ps. 54<sup>3</sup>.

In the first part of this psalm (vv. 1-5) the psalmist prays in general terms for the help of Yahweh. There are two grounds, the one being his own need, and the other the character of Yahweh. Much of the language is familiar and almost conventional. Thus he asks that Yahweh will *incline his ear* (v. 1), *save him* (v. 2), *shew favour* (v. 3) and *gladden his soul* (v. 4). His is *lowly* and *poor*, and counts himself among the *godly*—i.e., among the " saints " (see Vol. I, pp. 56 ff.). On the other side, too, we meet with well-worn terms ; Yahweh is *good* and *plenteous in love*. But there is one epithet not found elsewhere—*forgiving*. True, the thought is one of the most familiar in the Old Testament, but the form is unique. It belongs to a class of words indicating normal occupation, trade, or profession. Yahweh is a " forger "—it is his " nature and property ", and the psalmist might well have endorsed Voltaire's famous "*il pardonnera, c'est son métier*".

The second part of the psalm (vv. 6-11) also starts with a plea that Yahweh will *give ear*. In what follows, however, the emphasis is less on the *adversity* (v. 7) into which the psalmist has fallen than on the power and majesty of Yahweh. Other *gods* may exist, but none can boast the character and *deeds* of the God of Israel (v. 8). The writer feels dimly that the divine prestige will be enhanced by his deliverance ; he would have *all nations come and bow before Yahweh*, recognizing that he *alone* is *great*. In v. 11 he vows that, if he be delivered, he will henceforth *walk in the truth* of Yahweh, ever remaining faithful to him. Some scholars would emend the text in the latter part of the verse, substituting a word meaning " desire " for that rendered above "*rejoice*" (the Septuagint reading, here adopted, assumes the same consonants as the traditional Hebrew text, though with different vowels).

But this is to misunderstand all that the Hebrew felt when he used the word *fear*. It implies an attitude which is by no means incompatible with *rejoicing*; it is not only—indeed, not usually—akin to terror, but may imply, as here, respect, fidelity, worship. It is the proper emotional tone for any person who finds himself in the presence of a superior, not only when the superior may be hostile, but also when the relationship between the two is one of loving sympathy. In some ways it is the nearest single word in Hebrew for what we call “religion”, and it may well be accompanied by a solemn exultation inspired by the presence of a morally perfect omnipotence.

Finally (*vv.* 12–17), the psalmist passes to a more exact statement of his need. This part of the psalm also opens as if it were a fresh hymn; the writer is conscious of an inward impulse to *praise* and *honour* his God (*v.* 12). He expects (or, perhaps better, as Bultmann suggests, prays) that Yahweh will *deliver* him *from nethermost Sheol*; apparently his conception of the hereafter was so far advanced that he recognized different levels in the underworld. At last, in *v.* 14, he comes to a definite point. He is being persecuted, perhaps accused, by *the arrogant* and *the tyrants*. In this extremity he turns to that God who, from of old (*cf.* Ex. 34<sup>6</sup>), had been proclaimed as *compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in love and truth* (*v.* 15). He can *give strength* to his *servant* (*v.* 16), and in his humility the Psalmist takes the lowest of all social levels. The *servant* might be a temporary slave, working out his six years of bondage. But the *handmaid's son*—the child of the female slave, the “house-born” (*cf.* Gen. 15<sup>3</sup>, Exod. 21<sup>4,7</sup>, Jer. 2<sup>14</sup>)—was from his birth the property of his mother's owner, and could never hope for liberation. Just because Yahweh is his absolute and permanent owner, the psalmist believes that he will even *show a token*, and secure deliverance. So the psalm ends, with this note of hope and confidence, not without the natural desire for the discomfiture of the adversary.

### *Religious Teaching*

We do not look for systematic theology in a poem of this kind. In harmony with the normal post-exilic view, the psalmist believes in the character and supremacy of Yahweh, even if he has not attained to an absolute monotheism. But Yahweh has the power and the goodness to save, and his loving nature will lead him to pardon and restore his distressed saints.

## PSALM 87

THE grandeur of this short psalm is somewhat obscured by dislocations in the text. These dislocations are due to the lines having been copied out in their wrong order. This may be hypothetically explained in this way: a scribe, in copying out the psalm, inadvertently omitted some of the lines, which he subsequently added in the margin; a later scribe, in making his copy of the psalm, naturally wished to include the lines which had been placed in the margin; but this was no easy matter, because there was, presumably, no indication as to where they belonged in the text. The later scribe had, therefore, to do the best he could; but he was somewhat wanting in discernment, otherwise he would not, for example, have begun the psalm with a meaningless sentence, as it is in its present form; nor would he have been content with the illogical sequence of the lines as we now have them; nor does he seem to have realized the great significance of the refrain: "This one was born there".

To place the lines in their original order may not be possible—scholars differ on the subject—but it may, at any rate, be claimed that the following reconstruction brings out the universalistic note which runs through the psalm, and which makes it, from this point of view, one of the most inspiring in the Psalter.

The psalmist proclaims Zion as the most loved by Yahweh of all the centres of his worship; this is because Zion will become the world-centre of his worship. Zion is thought of, figuratively, as the spiritual mother of all men, so that of every nation the psalmist says: "This one was born there". Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and distant Kush receive special mention, but all peoples are included; and this sublime refrain is taken up by the worshippers in Zion itself, who in their song of praise and in their sacred dance in the sanctuary enthusiastically respond: "This one was born there". A brotherhood of man in the highest sense!

The question of date is difficult. The pronounced universalism was either due to prophetic influence—Deutero-Isaiah was its greatest exponent—or else it points to the Greek period. But the mention of Babylon as the great world-power by the side of Egypt indicates a time after the end of the Assyrian empire; a pre-exilic date is therefore improbable. On the other hand, this mention of Babylon is against a post-exilic date; and in post-exilic times Deutero-Isaiah's universalistic teaching was ignored, at any rate until the Greek period. We seem, therefore, to be led to the period of the Exile itself as the date of our psalm, and at the very end of this period, when the Return was

approaching. To this it can be objected that the worship in the Temple seems to be in full operation, since "the singers and the dancers" are spoken of. To this it can, however, be replied that the psalmist is envisaging in his mind's eye the re-establishment of the Temple worship, much in the same way that Deutero-Isaiah did (see, *e.g.*, Isa. 52<sup>11, 12</sup>, and note also 56<sup>1-8</sup>).

In the present state of the text there is practically no metrical structure; in the emended form of the text, which is confessedly conjectural, the metre is irregular.

*Of the Sons of Qorah; A Psalm, A Song.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Yahweh loveth the gates of Zion   | above all the dwelling-places of Jacob; |
| 1. ° Her foundation ° is upon the holy hills,  | 5°. he hath founded it ° for ever °.    |
| 3. Glorious things ° are told ° of thee,   | O city of God °: Selah °.               |
| 6. Yahweh writeth down in the peoples' ° register °:   | " This one was born there ";            |
| 4. ° I record ° Rahab and Babylon as those that know me:   | ° " This one was born there "; °        |
| Behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Kush:   | " This one was born there ";            |
| 5 <sup>ab</sup> . Yea, to Zion it shall be said, ° each one ° was born in her; ° singers and dancers | all respond in thee °:                  |
|  | ° " This one was born there. " °        |

*Text-critical Notes*

For the title see Vol. i. p. 15. 1. Read יסִדְּרָהָּ for רִגְלוֹ—, "his foundation", as though in reference to Yahweh, which comes in the next half-line. 5c. Read לַעֲוִלָּם for לַעֲלִיּוֹן, "Most High". Where this half-line stands in the Hebrew text it is inappropriate, while in *v.* 1 a half-line is wanting. We follow Gunkel here. 3. Lit. "it is told". *Selah* is included in the Hebrew metre, as sometimes elsewhere. 6. Read בִּכְרֹב for בְּכָרֶב, "when he writeth down". 4. Lit. "I make mention". The refrain in this *v.* is a conjectural addition; but it is demanded both because of "I record", and because otherwise a half-line is wanting; moreover, the symmetry requires it. 5a. Lit. "a man and a man". Read, with Gressmann: וְשָׁרִים כְּחִלְלִים כָּל-מַעְיָנִי בָּךְ for וְשָׁרִים וְחִלְלִים כָּל־עֲנִי בָּךְ "and singers like dancers all my springs are in thee". The Hebrew text is obviously corrupt. The refrain here is again a conjectural addition, but it is required after "all respond in thee"; the refrain, moreover, is the obvious antiphon.

1-3. The words of the two opening verses recall Isaiah's belief in the inviolability of the holy city; *the gates* is a synonym for the city. Yahweh's sanctuary is often spoken of as his *dwelling-place*; the reference is, therefore, to the other sanctuaries in the land. The *glorious things* to which the psalmist refers may well have been such utterances of Deutero-Isaiah as are recorded in Isa. 54<sup>1-8</sup>—*e.g.*, *v.* 3: "For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess the nations". The *city of God* occurs also in Ps. 46<sup>4</sup>. 6-5<sup>a</sup>. These verses contain the psalmist's main theme—viz., Yahweh's recognition of the Gentiles as the children of the Holy City, figuratively represented as their mother. Here again Deutero-Isaiah's words seem to be in the psalmist's mind; in Isa. 54<sup>1</sup> it is said: "For

more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Yahweh", and in *v.* 5 the prophet says: "For thy Maker is thine husband. Yahweh of hosts is his name." The Gentiles are thus regarded as his spiritual children, and they are recorded as belonging to his family in the heavenly *register*. This idea of Yahweh's book of life was a familiar one—see, *e.g.*, Exod. 32<sup>32</sup>, Ps. 69<sup>28</sup>, 139<sup>16</sup>, Isa. 4<sup>3</sup>. In this book, according to the psalmist's universalistic outlook, Yahweh registers against the name of each people: "*This one was born there*". The refrain occurs in the text twice only, but in view of the displacements in the text, referred to above, we have added it in two places where it seems to be called for. Among the peoples specifically mentioned Egypt is called by the emblematical name of *Rahab* (see note on 89<sup>10</sup>); together with *Babylon* it was the leading world-power when the psalmist wrote, though the downfall of Babylon was near at hand; *Philistia* and *Tyre* (Phœnicia), who for centuries were the neighbouring peoples of Judah and Israel, respectively, are appropriately mentioned; while *Kush* (Ethiopia) represents the more distant peoples who are all to be received as Zion's children. The psalmist ends by picturing to himself the worshippers in the Temple, soon to be rebuilt, joining in the refrain: "*This one was born there*".

### *Religious Teaching*

The psalmist who wrote this psalm was an idealist of the highest order. That he contemplated the realization of his ideal in reference to his own time, as Gunkel holds, we cannot believe. Nor can we accept the contention of some other authorities that the psalmist is thinking of the conversion of the Gentiles in the "last times". His thought soars beyond the present; but the future of which he conceives is not that of the end of the present world-order. The psalmist's central and foremost thought is of God, who made all men, and who will, in his own time, draw all men unto him. The All-Fatherhood of God is an eternal fact which demands the brotherhood of man. God is true to himself; but men are not true to themselves. Nevertheless, the psalmist, with his sublime outlook, envisages a time in world-history when, irrespective of nationality, men will come to themselves, and therefore to God. It is an ideal; but, with divine optimism, the psalmist portrays its superb realization as taking place within time-space. The when is not his concern; he is content with framing the beautiful ideal. That he should picture Jerusalem as the home of welcome to the wanderers was a necessity, for this alone was the world's centre of the worship of God.

## PSALM 88

THIS psalm is unique. It is a desperate cry of suffering, unrelieved by a single ray of comfort or of hope. In form it is the utterance of an individual, but the doctrine of corporate personality has enabled some expositors to regard it as an expression of national sorrow. Not a few readers, however, will feel that the agony is too keen to be that of sympathy, even of the deepest sympathy for the calamities of the people. It is written with the very heart's blood of the poet.

If we take the piece as a "dirge of the community", its date will almost certainly be that of the early exile, and it will be contemporary with the earliest of the poems in the book of *Lamentations*. But there are good grounds for supposing that the author was acquainted with the book of *Job*, and may himself also have been a leper. In that case the fourth century is the earliest period to which we can assign the psalm.

The thought and language of *v.* 8 are closely paralleled in *v.* 18, and *Selah* occurs at the end of *vv.* 7 and 10—in the latter case it was not read by the Septuagint. These facts, however, hardly warrant us in finding a formal strophic arrangement; there is no break in the subject-matter corresponding to the divisions suggested by the points just noted.

The metre is 3 : 3 throughout, with 2 : 2 : 2 in *v.* 5a. Anacrusis occurs in *vv.* 1, 13 and 14, and the word בַּעֲתִיךָ in *v.* 16 counts as two metrical units.

*A Song. A Psalm. Of the Sons of Qorah. For the Precentor :*  
*On Mahalath l'annoth. Maskil. Of Heman the Ezrahite.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1 (2). O Yahweh !<br/>         ° My God ! I have cried ° ° by day °,<br/>         2 (3). May my prayer come before thee !<br/>         3 (4). For my soul is sated with sorrows,<br/>         4 (5). I am numbered with them that go<br/>             down to the Pit,<br/>         5 (6). ° As the dead ° I am free, as the<br/>             slain,<br/>             Whom thou hast remembered no<br/>             more,<br/>         6 (7). Thou testest me in the nether-<br/>             most Pit,<br/>         7 (8). Upon me resteth thy wrath.<br/>         8 (9). Thou hast put mine acquaintance<br/>             far from me,<br/>             ° I am shut up °, I cannot go forth,<br/>             I called thee, O Yahweh, every day,<br/>         10 (11). Wilt thou work a wonder for the<br/>             dead ?<br/>         11 (12). Shall thy love be told in the tomb ?<br/>         12 (13). Shall thy wonders be known in<br/>             the darkness ?</p> | <p>cried out in the night before thee.<br/>         incline thine ear to my ringing note.<br/>         and my life draweth near to Sheol.<br/>         I am become as a man strengthless.<br/>         that repose in the tomb.<br/>         seeing that they have been cut off from<br/>             thy hand.<br/>         ° among them that are restrained ° in<br/>             the depths.<br/>         all thy breakers ° thou hast brought over<br/>             me °. <i>Selah</i>.<br/>         thou hast made me loathsome to them.<br/>         9 (10). mine eye languisheth from<br/>             affliction.<br/>         I spread out my palms unto thee.<br/>         or shall shades rise to praise thee ? <i>Selah</i>.<br/>         ° or ° thy fidelity in Abaddon ?<br/>         thy triumph in the land of oblivion ?</p> |
|---|---|

- 13 (14). And I !  
Unto thee, O Yahweh, have I cried, and in the morning my prayer was wont to greet thee.
- 14 (15). Wherefore ?  
O Yahweh, dost thou cast off my soul ? hidest thy face from me ?
- 15 (16). Afflicted am I, and am weary from my youth, I suffer thy terrors, ° I grow faint °.
- 16 (17). Thy fury hath passed over me, thy terrors ° have made an end of me °.
- 17 (18). They are about me as water all the day, they have made their circuit against me altogether.
- 18 (19). Lover hast thou taken far from me, and comrade ° and acquaintance thou hast withdrawn °.

## Text-critical Notes

1. Read, with Bickell, שְׁלוּעִי for "God of my salvation". Read, with G, יוֹמִי for "day of". 5. Read, with some Hebr. MSS and T, בְּתוֹכָם for "among the dead". 6. Read חֹשֶׁךְ for "in the darkness". 8. Read, with G, אֶחָד for "shut up". 11. Insert יָאֵם (omitted by haplography). 15. Read, חֲפִצָּה (cp. Ps. 77<sup>2</sup>) for חֲפִצָּה "I am distracted". 16. Read צַמְרוּרִי for צַמְרוּרִי (same meaning). 18. Read (cf. Jerome, S) וְיָמִיךְ דְּשִׁכְרָה for "mine acquaintances are darkness".

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 18.

The whole psalm is a cry from the night of suffering and doubt. We must not look too carefully for coherence and continuity of thought; the poet's mind turns swiftly from one aspect of his case to another. But he begins, in the only way a man in such straits can begin, with a direct appeal to *Yahweh*, metrically emphasized by the anacrusis, to whom he *cries* for help continuously *by day* and *in the night*. The spontaneous urgency of his plea is emphasized by the fact that it is a *ringing note*—a term normally reserved for an outburst of sudden exultation. It is as if the whole of his emotional world had been inverted by his pain, and the natural expression of the keenest joy has become a token of the most poignant grief (2). The same twist in thought appears in the next metaphor; the hungry, when at last full-fed, says he is *sated*—satisfied. But it is sorrow that has glutted the psalmist's appetite, his very *soul*. So had Yahweh himself spoken to Isaiah of the sacrifices of Israel (Isa. 1<sup>11</sup>). One thing only is left for the sufferer—death which will bring him to *Sheol* (3). We cannot escape a comparison with Job's point of view (cf. Job 7<sup>9</sup>, 21, 10<sup>21</sup>, 14<sup>18</sup> ff., 16<sup>22</sup>, 17<sup>3</sup>, etc.). So far has this experience gone that the victim is already *as one dead*. The use of the word *free* may be an audacious and bitter parody and perversion of Job's phrase in Job 3<sup>19</sup>, but even so in the psalmist's mind it probably carries a suggestion of leprosy. A closely allied word is used of the "lazar-house" in which Uzziah was confined (2 Kings 15<sup>5</sup>), and much of what the psalmist says is consistent with his having suffered from the most terrible disease known to ancient Israel. A characteristic feature in the treatment of leprosy was that the victim was already accounted dead, and the psalmist's



experience tells him that it is not only man, but also God, who has ceased to think of him as still existing, has *remembered* him *no more*, and has *cut him off from the divine hand*, that is from the nearness and power of Yahweh (5). The thought is continued in 6, where the poet sees himself as already *restrained in the nethermost Pit*—either in Sheol in general or in an especially deep portion in Sheol—or in the *depths*. The last word is one which suggests the bottom of the sea, and may hint at a form of the creation-myth current in Israel, according to which the primeval chaos-monster was not slain, but imprisoned beneath the ocean, or even equated with the sea (cf., e.g., Job 7<sup>12</sup>). The sea-metaphor is repeated in 7, where the psalmist thinks of himself as overwhelmed by the *wrath* of Yahweh, as by *breakers* on a rocky coast—surely a reminiscence of Ps. 42<sup>7</sup>.

A new aspect of the case is introduced in 8, again recalling the fate of the leper. All the sufferer's friends have left him; he is utterly lonely, and absolutely bereft of human companionship. He is indeed *loathsome* to others, as Job was to his *acquaintance* and even to his wife (Job 19<sup>13, 14, 17</sup>, cf. also Isa. 53<sup>3, 4</sup>—another case of leprosy). Even if others would see him, he cannot reach them, for he is segregated, *shut up*, and *cannot go forth* (8–9a). To this thought the psalmist will return again in the last verse of the psalm.

With swift transition the poet comes back to God. It is his relation to Yahweh (again we find a parallel with Job) that is central; the other elements in his bitter experience are but peripheral. In Sheol he will be utterly and for ever cut off from God. The divine power cannot reach him to *work a wonder*, and he cannot lift up his voice in *praise* to Yahweh. Yahweh has nothing to gain (cf. Job 10<sup>4</sup> <sup>tt.</sup>) by consigning him to torture and destruction—the literal meaning of *Abaddon*, a synonym for Sheol, the *darkness* and *oblivion* where the divine *wonders* and *triumph* cannot be known.

So once more he comes to the great gulf between himself and God, and recalls how he has *cried* for help, and how he has been wont to send his *prayer* to *greet* his Lord in the early dawn (14). Hence the great puzzle—*why*, in spite of all this, has Yahweh *cast him off*? Like Job, he has done his best, and all is in vain. *Afflicted* and *weary*, almost expiring, from the sickness that has clung to him from his early *youth*, he feels that the only possible source for his sufferings is the divine *fury* which has overwhelmed him with deadly *terrors* (the only other occurrence of the word is in Job 6<sup>4</sup>). Repeated grades and type of horror have *made their circuit against* him, following one another, as it were, in a continuous orbit, and each in turn swooping on him as it comes nearest to him, so stabbing his soul with an endless succession of cumulative agonies (17). And all this he must bear alone.

*Religious Teaching*

In the whole Bible there is no other place where we have so forcibly presented to us the meaning and results of a refusal to believe in the life to come. As we have seen, the situation of the psalmist is much that of the poet to whom we owe the book of *Job*, but the sufferings of that noble spirit lead him in the end, after desperate battles of the soul, to the conviction that death is not the end of God's dealings with man. The psalmist seems aware of that view, but cannot accept it, and is, therefore, left in utter hopelessness. If the drama of religion (to consider no other aspect of the case) is to be played out to the very end upon the stage of this world, then there is no possibility of belief in final goodness. Many men may get some kind of compensation for their suffering—and suffering is a universal experience—during their earthly life; there are those who do not. Their number may not be great, and only a small proportion may be capable of intense feeling, but if, in all human history, there had been but one who had had to endure what this man endured, with no hope of God in the hereafter, then a true optimism would be impossible—there is an evil power in the world before which good may be powerless. A belief in immortality is fundamental, not merely to human happiness, but to divine justification, and there can be no valid theodicy if it be excluded. If this psalm does nothing else, it puts the issue before us in clear-cut alternatives, and bids us make our choice.

## PSALM 89

THERE is some justification for the belief, though opinions on the subject differ,<sup>1</sup> that this psalm is a combination of three originally independent psalms (cp. Pss. 19, 27, 127, each of which is a combination of two separate psalms). This is suggested by the entirely different subject-matter of each of the three component parts. The purpose of the compiler in combining these appears to have been to set in review the origin, development, and final disappearance of the kingship. The first two verses are introductory. The first psalm extols the all-powerful might of Yahweh in heaven and earth; he is King above, and his throne is in heaven (v. 14); the earthly kingship is from him and under his protection (vv. 17, 18). Then the compiler illustrates, by the second psalm chosen, the glory of the kingship as exemplified by the royal Davidic house. And, finally, he adds, in what appears to be only part of another psalm, the record of the final disappearance of the

<sup>1</sup> See the very interesting essay by Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Rôle of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus*, in *The Labyrinth*, pp. 77 ff. (ed. S. H. Hooke [1935]).

kingship. The component parts, after the introductory verses, are : (a) vv. 5-18 ; (b) vv. 3, 4, 19-37 ; (c) vv. 38-51 ; the last verse, 52, is a benediction which marks the close of Book III (see Vol. I, pp. 2 ff.). For the purpose, perhaps, of seeking to unify his material, the compiler separated vv. 3, 4 from the psalm to which they belong, and placed them (after the two introductory verses) at the beginning of the whole amalgamation. In the following rendering these two verses are placed in what we conceive to have been their original position.

The first of the three psalms here combined is a Hymn of Praise glorifying the supremacy of Yahweh among the heavenly hosts. The second commemorates Yahweh's covenant with the house of David. The third is a pathetic plaint over the downfall of the monarchy. The three themes are thus of a very different nature.

The difficulty and precariousness of assigning dates to the psalms in general are fully recognized ; quite tentatively, therefore, we suggest the following dates for these three psalms, respectively : (a) The mention of Tabor and Hermon in v. 12 shows that this first psalm (vv. 5-18) was written by one living in northern Israel ; vv. 15-18 make it clear that it belongs to the time of the monarchy. The psalm must, therefore, be dated before 722/1 B.C., when the northern kingdom fell. That it was a time of prosperity is evident from vv. 16, 17 ; it is, therefore, quite possible that the psalm was written during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (see II Kings 14<sup>25</sup>) ; his date was 788-747 B.C.

(b) That the second psalm belongs to the southern kingdom is obvious on the face of it. A time of prosperity is likewise indicated by vv. 28, 29 ; it is therefore possible that this psalm was written during the reign of Josiah (639-608 B.C.).

(c) There could be no greater contrast than that between this and the preceding psalm. Here we have depicted nothing less than the downfall of the Davidic monarchy (vv. 43, 44). The date is clearly indicated in v. 45, which must refer to Jehoiachin : "Thou hast shortened the days of his youth", cp. 2 Kings 24<sup>8</sup> : "Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign". The date may, therefore, with some confidence, be given as 597 B.C. The final combination belongs to post-exilic times.

The metre of (a) is almost uniformly 4 : 4 (with anacrusis, "O Yahweh" in v. 8) ; the three concluding vv. 16-18, are 3 : 3 ; that of (b) is 3 : 3 throughout ; in (c) it varies, vv. 38-45 are 3 : 3, v. 16 is 4 : 3, and vv. 47-51 are 4 : 4.

*Maskil of Ethan, the Ezrahite.*

- 1 (2). ° Of thy loving-acts, ° Yahweh, will I ceaselessly sing,  
will ever make known thy faithfulness with my mouth ;
- 2 (3). For I said, For ever ° is thy love ° built up,  
° like ° the heavens is thy faithfulness ° established for ever °.



(c)

- 38 (39). But thou hast spurned and rejected,  
 39 (40). Hast annulled the covenant with thy servant.  
 40 (41). Hast broken down all his walls,  
 41 (42). All that pass by have plundered him,  
 42 (43). Thou hast exalted the right-hand of his foes,  
 43 (44). Thou hast turned his sword ° from the adversary °,  
 44 (45). ° Thou hast broken the sceptre from his hand °,  
 45 (46). Thou hast shortened the days of his youth,  
 46 (47). How long, Yahweh, wilt thou hide thyself for ever,  
 47 (48). ° Remember how I come to an end for ever,  
 48 (49). What man doth live who shall not see death?  
 49 (50). Where are thine acts-of-love, the former ones, ° Yahweh °,  
 50 (51). Remember, O Lord, the reproach of ° thy servant °,  
 50 (51). Wherewith thine enemies reproach, Yahweh,  
 52 (53). Blessed be Yahweh for ever,
- hast been wrath with thine anointed;  
 hast polluted his crown to the earth;  
 hast made his defences a ruin;  
 he is become the scorn of his neighbours;  
 hast gladdened all his enemies;  
 hast not granted him victory in battle;  
 and his throne to the ground hast thou cast;  
 hast covered him ° with grey-hair °.  
 Selah.  
 shall thy wrath burn like fire?  
 hast thou created for nought all the sons of men? °  
 shall his soul escape from the hand of Sheol? Selah.  
 which, thou swarest to David in thy faithfulness?  
 which I bear in my bosom—° the contempt of ° the peoples—  
 wherewith they reproach the footsteps of thine anointed.  
 Amen and Amen.

## Text-critical Notes

For the title see Vol. I, p. 18. 1. Read, with G, חַסְדֵּי for חַסְדֵּי "the loving-acts of". 2. Read חַסְדֵּי for חַסֵּד "love". Add פֶּ before "the heavens". Read, with G, הַבֵּן for תִּכְבֵּן "thou wilt establish"; and for בָּהֶם "in them", read לְדֹר וְדֹר as in v. 1; two words under one beat.

(a)

5. Om. בִּי "in", the subject of "shall praise" is both "the assembly of the heavenly ones" and "the heavens". 7. Read, with G, רַב הוּא for רָבָה "greatly". 8. Read חַסְדֵּי וְאֱמִנָה for חַסְדֵּי וְאֱמִנָה "the might of Yah and thy faithfulness". 9. Read, with G, בְּשֹׁאֵן for בְּשֹׁאֵן "when it riseth up". 12. Or read, alternatively, with G, לְשִׁמְךָ "at thy name". 13. Read, with S, וְלֵךְ for עִם "with". 15. Transpose יְהוָה "Yahweh" to the end of the v. 16. Read יִרְגְּנוּ, being a better parallel to "they rejoice", for יִרְגְּמוּ "they are exalted". 17. Read, with Q<sup>re</sup>, תִּרְאִים; K<sup>thibh</sup> has תִּרְאִים "thou dost exalt".

(b)

3. Read עָשִׂיתִי for עָשִׂיתִי "I made"; and read לְבַחֲךָ for לְבַחֲךָ "with my chosen"; and read גִּשְׁבַּעְתִּי for גִּשְׁבַּעְתִּי "I swore"; עַבְדִּי for עַבְדִּי "my servant". The reason for these emendations is that when utterances are put into the mouth of God they are always preceded by some introductory words, which is not the case here. 19. Read לְחַסְדֵּי for לְחַסְדֵּי "thy sanctified ones". Read גִּזְרִי for גִּזְרִי "help", cp. v. 39. 33. Read אֶפְרֹחַ (lit. "take away") for אֶפְרֹחַ "I will violate". 37. Read, with Duhm, וְיִבְרַח שָׁמַיָּא for וְיִבְרַח שָׁמַיָּא "and a faithful witness in the sky".

(c)

43. Read *מִצֵּר* for *צִיָּר* "flint" or "edge". 44. Read *שָׁכַרְתָּ מִפְּהוּ מִיָּדוֹ* for *הִשְׁפַּתָּ מִיָּדוֹ* "thou hast caused to cease from his purity". 45. Read *זָכַר מִיָּדוֹ* for *זָכַר מִיָּדוֹ* "shame". 47. Read, with Baethgen and Gunkel, *זָכַר מִיָּדוֹ* for *זָכַר מִיָּדוֹ* "I am for ever". 48. Read, with Baethgen and Gunkel, *זָכַר מִיָּדוֹ* for *זָכַר מִיָּדוֹ* "Remember, what is duration? On account of what vanity hast thou created all the sons of men?" The corruption of the Hebrew text is manifest. 49. Read, with many MSS, *יְהוָה* "Yahweh", for *יְהוָה* "O Lord". 50. Read *עַבְדֶּיךָ* for *עַבְדֶּיךָ* "thy servants". Read *כָּל־רַבִּים* for *כָּל־רַבִּים* "all many".

(a)

1, 2. In these introductory *vs.* the psalmist announces the theme with which he is going to deal, viz. the *loving-acts* of *Yahweh*. This word (*hesed*) connotes more than "mercies", as it is usually rendered in the English Versions; it means "love" and all that love involves. The note of continuity is very pronounced; he *will sing ceaselessly*, lit. "for ever"; he will make known *Yahweh's faithfulness for ever*, lit. "to generation and generation", but this term is often used for "ever"; and again, *Yahweh's love is built up "for ever"*, and *his faithfulness established "for ever"* (on this last see crit. note). The thought of God's love being *built up* occurs here only, it expresses permanence, *like* the eternal structure of the *heavens*; for the idea of the heavens as a building, see Gen. 7<sup>11</sup>, Am. 9<sup>6</sup>, Mal. 3<sup>10</sup>.

3 and 4 are dealt with after *v.* 18.

5-10. This opening section, which tells of the praise accorded to *Yahweh* by the heavenly hosts, is of importance for the history of the Hebrew conception of God. We have here echoes of ancient non-Israelite beliefs which were taken over by Israel's religious teachers, and ultimately adapted. The *wondrous-acts* of *Yahweh* are in reference to the old Babylonian myth of the primeval combat between the god Marduk and the monster Tiamat, who was the enemy of the gods; the *role* of Marduk was in Hebrew religion transferred to *Yahweh*. The *assembly of the holy ones* refers to the gathering of all the gods in council, just as in the Babylonian myth all the gods assembled to decide how best they might be able to meet and overcome their enemy Tiamat.

Later Jewish monotheistic teaching explained that the "gods" were ministers of *Yahweh*, and wholly subordinate to him. The expression *sons of gods*, applied to them, attests the ancient belief, see further Ps. 29<sup>1, 2</sup>. For the *assembly* (of the *holy ones*) two different expressions are used; in *v.* 5 *qahal* is the ordinary word for a gathering, but used also in the technical sense of "the congregation" of Israel; in later days, the word used in *v.* 7, *sôdh*, means rather the exclusive, or secret, council of the gods; in this sense of a kind of "parliament" of the gods it occurs here only. The expression God of hosts points to the original meaning of "*Yahweh Šebhâ'ôth*", the "hosts" referring

to the heavenly beings, and indicating that in the divine assembly Yahweh is *par excellence*, the warrior God, Captain of the superhuman armies; in later times the name was used of Yahweh as the leader of the armies of Israel. In 9, 10 there is again a reference to the primeval combat, *the sea* being identified with Tiamat; the corresponding Hebrew name, Tehom (Gen. 12), means "the deep". The *raging of the sea* refers to Tiamat's wrath at Marduk's approach, *the roaring of its waves* is in reference to the shouting of the helpers who fought on Tiamat's side. Rahab, used as an emblematical name for Egypt (cp. Ps. 87<sup>4</sup>, Isa. 30<sup>7</sup>), lit. the "proud", or "defiant", one, was another name for Tiamat (Job 9<sup>13</sup>, 26<sup>12</sup>). The details of this primeval combat, transferred from Marduk to Yahweh, occur in the Fourth Tablet of the Babylonian Creation-myth (see further, *Myth and Ritual*, ed. S. H. Hooke, Essay III [1933]).

11-14. As the result of Yahweh's victory, *heaven and earth* became his; and his work of creation began; hitherto the earth had been "waste and void" (Gen. 1<sup>2</sup>), now the *world*, as a place for man to dwell in, is founded, together with all that it brings forth. *North and south—i.e.*, from end to end—the world was *created* by Yahweh. Then the psalmist naturally turns to his own land, the centre of the worship of Yahweh, and refers to the two prominent sanctuaries, *Tabor and Hermon*, in which *men shout for joy in his name*. In earlier days these were evidently well-known places of worship, though the syncretistic character of worship there called for the prophet's censure (for Tabor see Hos. 5<sup>1</sup>, and cp. Baal-Hermon in Judges 3<sup>3</sup>); but the psalmist is thinking now only of the worship of Yahweh offered on these mountain-tops, mentioning specifically his *righteousness and justice, love and truth*.

15-18. These *vv.* tell of the trust that the people have in Yahweh, and their joy in worshipping him who is their strength and stay. The *shout* is a technical term referring to the welcome of Yahweh in the sanctuary (cp. 1 Sam. 4<sup>5</sup>, 6, 2 Chron. 15<sup>14</sup>, Ps. 47<sup>5</sup>), uttered by *the people* of Israel who were skilled by long experience in his worship. The *horn* is symbolic of strength (cp. Ps. 75<sup>5</sup>).

(b)

3, 4, 19-37. Yahweh's covenant with David, whose royal house is to endure for ever. With *vv.* 3, 4, cp. 2 Sam. 7<sup>16</sup>.

19-28. These verses deal with God's mercies to David personally, and are based on the records preserved in the books of *Samuel*. *At that time* refers to the time when the divine message was received by the prophet Nathan to announce to David (see 2 Sam. 7<sup>4</sup> ff.) the permanency of his dynasty; thy *sanctified one* is Nathan. *For one chosen*, cp. 2 Sam. 7<sup>6</sup>. *With my holy oil* . . . , David's anointing is mentioned in 1 Sam. 16<sup>13</sup>, and he is called "the anointed of Yahweh" in 2 Sam.

19<sup>21</sup> (22). With 22-25 cp. 2 Sam. 7<sup>9</sup> 11. *My father art thou* recalls 2 Sam. 7<sup>14</sup>: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."

29-37. In these *vv.* it is the seed of David which is spoken of. The psalmist contemplates the unfaithfulness of the later kings of the Davidic line, and the punishment which followed; yet God's love looked in mercy upon them, and his covenant with David held good. Until the time appointed, his throne stood sure.

(c)

38-51. The great contrast between this and the preceding section justifies the contention that we have here a composition belonging to a different period. The nation is in a pitiable state; God seems to have been on the side of its enemies, for his wrath against his people has been justly aroused. The piece falls into two parts:

38-45. The covenant so firmly maintained by Yahweh through all the history of the Judahite monarchy has now been repudiated; the nation is as a flock of sheep, the *walls* of whose fold, as the Hebrew word used here for *wall* implies, have been broken down; this, as the second part of 40 shows, is a figure for the cities of Judah. The interplay between metaphor and reality continues in 41, where the people, now without defence, are exposed to the *plundering* and *scorn* of every *passer-by*. We may suppose that the historical reference is to the inroads of the *neighbours* of Judah, especially the Edomites, during the last days of the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 24<sup>2</sup>), and to the Exile (cp. Ps. 137<sup>7</sup>, Lam. 1<sup>21</sup>, 4<sup>21, 22</sup>, Obad. 10). Against these gloating invaders Judah is helpless; her fighting power has gone with the shattered *sceptre* and dismantled *throne* of a king whose youth is spent too soon, and which gives place to premature age (see the introductory section).

46-51. The psalmist turns from description to petition, and, putting his words into the king's mouth, pleads that the *fire* of Yahweh's *wrath* may be quenched. He appeals to Yahweh's work in the creation of man, to his power to save from death, to the historic benefits which he has conferred on the house of David; if these are not all to be futile, then surely Yahweh will intervene to rescue his *servant* from the reproaches of those who are as much the enemies of God as of his *anointed*.

### *Religious Teaching*

As an act of congregational praise this psalm is one of the most striking in the Psalter; its component parts have been skilfully and appropriately joined together for the purpose of liturgical worship. The teaching it conveys is of profound and permanent importance. This can be set forth under two heads:



The use made of ancient and non-Israelite material is not to be accounted for merely as a matter of antiquarian interest to the psalmist ; it is, in effect, an illustration of the prophet's words : " Art thou not from everlasting Yahweh, my holy God ! " (Hab. 1<sup>12</sup>). The psalmist accepts the old Babylonian and pre-exilic Israelite myth as a groping in darkness after truth. Similarly, with regard to the old-world idea of the great " parliament of the gods " assembled in the heavens. Just as among the Babylonians Marduk stood out as a champion among the gods, so to the psalmist Yahweh stood supreme among the denizens of heaven. The fact that later Israelite teachers could thus adapt primitive, inadequate, and erroneous ideas, illustrates the truth that God, who is from everlasting, reveals himself to men in every age in accordance with their capacity for apprehension ; he has never left himself without witness (cp. Acts 14<sup>17</sup>).

The other great truth which the psalm teaches is that there is an intimate relationship between the destiny of the nation and the divine purpose concerning it. God, all-powerful in heaven and earth, ordained the kingship for his people as a means of social well-being among them, and chose the Davidic line. But the divine plan was thwarted by the sinful will of men, as the psalmist seems to be beginning to realize, though he did not see the final end of the monarchy which was near at hand. Thus, again under prophetic influence, the psalm teaches that God is the God of history ; and though men, being free agents by God's will, blight his purposes, yet in his mercy he overrules their folly. Ultimately the theocratic form of government made the nation better than it had ever been before. Though the psalmist did not see this signal illustration of his teaching, yet he fully recognized the truth of God's guiding hand in history.

## PSALM 90

IN this poem we have one of the best-known pieces in the Psalter. It is classed by Gunkel as a hymn, but, though it begins with an ascription of praise and an expression of confidence, the more fitting title is that provided by the traditional heading, *A Prayer*. It is essentially a prayer, a *cri du cœur* which has never failed to make its appeal to the heart of its readers. It may even be regarded as a dirge over the futility of all human effort and the evanescence of all human achievement, and may be compared with the lament which Æschylus puts into the mouth of Cassandra :

" Ah for the fate of man ! if prosperous  
 'Tis but a sketch, and if misfortune come,  
 The wet sponge with its touch blots out the lines."

(Ag. 1327-1329.)

But the Hebrew poet, even more than the Greek, has an intense conviction of a personal God, who, however far he may be removed from the frailty of man's brief life, is yet open to an appeal, and can, if he will, secure to his creatures a durability like his own. It is to be noted that there is no thought of immortality, and it is only the belief in a continuity of personal existence after death that has given man the assurance for which the psalmist so passionately longs.

The poem was ascribed by tradition to Moses. The reflective type of mind here exhibited, however, suggests a later rather than an earlier date. The author was possibly familiar with the book of *Job*, and knew the story of Paradise much as we now have it in Gen. 3<sup>1</sup>. He may also have been acquainted with the creation narrative as given in Gen. 1<sup>9</sup>, though it is possible that the reference in v. 2 is to an old myth on which the narrative of Paradise was ultimately based. In the complete absence of any reference to historical events—there were many periods in Jewish history in which an individual or the whole people might endure hardship—we may assign it to the same age in spiritual development as that to which the book of *Job* belongs.

The text seems to have suffered in course of transmission, though not as badly as some commentators have supposed. This in itself suggests that the psalm was a favourite, which was frequently copied and re-copied. Occasionally the Septuagint offers a better text, but its rendering of this psalm presents some curious features.

The metre is 3 : 3 throughout, with 3 : 3 : 3 in v. 2.

*A Prayer. Of Moses, the Man of God.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. O Lord !<br>A dwelling hast thou been  | for us in all generations.  |
| 2. Ere the mountains were born,<br>ere the earth had travailed, and the world,          | ° from everlasting ° to everlasting thou art God.                                   |
| 3. Thou bringest man back to destruction,   | and sayest, "Return, sons of men".  |
| 4. ° For a thousand years in thy sight  | are as a passing yesterday, ° and a watch.  |
| ° In the night 5. thou checkest their sleep ° ;   | in the morning they become as ° grass °.  |
| 6. At morn it doth blossom and burgeon,   | at eve doth it droop and wither.  |
| 7. ° So ° perish we in thine anger,   | and in thy wrath are we confounded.   |
| 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,  | our secret sins in the light of thy face.   |
| 9. For all our days have declined in thy fury,  | our years ° are ended ° as a sigh.  |
| 10. The days of our years ° ° are seventy years,<br>Yet their pride is pain and sorrow, | or through strength eighty years ;<br>for it is cut off swiftly, and we have flown. |
| 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?  | ° and who feareth the stroke ° of thy fury ?  |
| 12. To number our days so ° teach us °,   | ° that we may let wisdom enter our heart °.   |
| 13. Back, O Yahweh ! How long !   | and repent concerning thy servants.   |
| 14. Satisfy us at morn with thy love,   | that we may exult and be glad all our days.   |

15. Gladden us as the days when thou afflictedst us, the years when we saw evil.  
 16. Let thy working appear to thy servants, and thy splendour upon their sons;  
 17. And let the loveliness of the Lord ° be upon us, and the work of our hands ° establish °.

*Text-critical Notes*

2. Om. "and". 4-5. Read וְלַיְלָה יִרְמָתָם שָׁנָה for "a watch in the night. Thou floodest them away (?) in sleep". 5. Om. "that passeth away". 7. Read, with Cheyne, כֵּן for "for". 9. Read, with S, בָּלֵךְ for "we bring to an end". 10. Om., with Baethgen, "in them". 11. Read, with Gunkel, הוֹרִיעֵנִי וְיִי־רָא רָחֵם for "and according to thy fear". 12. Read, with Budde, הוֹרִיעֵנִי לְבָרְכָה for "a heart of wisdom". 17. Om., with 2 Heb. MSS, "our God". Om. (cf. Baethgen), "upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it" (doublet).

Is life worth living? For the individual it is one long struggle against forces which threaten its destruction, and the wrestler, impelled by the physical instinct of self-preservation, battles on, with the certain knowledge that, sooner or later, the powers of decay will triumph. In the meantime we must face the universal experience of pain—pain of body, mind and soul—the sense of frustration and of ineptitude. For most men there are pleasures, joys, comforts, even happiness, which in greater or less degree serve to counterbalance the load of suffering, but there are cases—we think inevitably of Ps. 88 and its writer—which seem to offer no alleviation.

What is the purpose of it all? We may answer, in altruistic mood, that the aim of all true human striving, often unconsciously pursued, is the preservation and betterment of the race. Our conflict and our failure, our spent strength and limited achievement, may win a happier, more comfortable life for those who are to follow us in ages yet to come. But we know only too well that mankind, as a physical species, is doomed as surely as the individual. Countless æons may still come and go before the end is reached, but it is certain that, at long last, all life must vanish from this planet, and our earth, with all that it bears, be left an atom of dust in a vast whirling universe of senseless matter. Physical life, in its human as in its other forms, is but a temporary incident in the story of a world of death.

At first sight it would seem that the tragedy of life is but enhanced by an instinct which, as far as we know, is not only peculiar to man, but is confined to the higher developments of his spirit. There is a natural demand for that which will survive, the poet's "monument more durable than bronze". In the last resort we can never be *satisfied* with the temporary and the evanescent. Eternity is set in our hearts, and the eternal alone can meet our needs. It is not infinity, but finitude that is inconceivable (since every limit implies a beyond), and the deepest, most passionate yearning of the human soul is to be and to do something that will outlast time itself.

In Ps. 90 we have the reflection of a mood in which such inevitable facts as these are faced. It opens with a brief ascription of praise (vv. 1-2), which is not mere theology, but the product of experience. Man has, *in all generations*, found in God a *dwelling*; he has made his home in the eternal. (Gunkel is surely right in preferring this, the reading of the Hebrew text, to the easier, but more superficial word "fortress" handed down through the tradition of the ancient Egyptian Jews.) God is older than time, older than the world, and the poet's thought goes back to the mythology dimly reflected in Gen. 1<sup>12</sup>, according to which the earth herself was the mother of all that lives upon her breast.

But at once the thought of human evanescence rises up against that of divine eternity; the poet feels instantly the contrast between the deathless God and his perishing creatures. He *brings man back to destruction*, crushing him to powder, and bids him *return* to that dust from which he was taken (cf. Gen. 3<sup>19</sup>). Again God and man stand opposed. The one is above all time, for to him all time is one, and *a thousand years are as a passing yesterday*, or a single four-hour *watch*. Very different is the fate he imposes on men. Even by *night*, when rest might be sought in *sleep*, God intervenes. The psalmist uses a rare and obscure Hebrew word, whose meaning is best understood by reference to an Arabic root indicating the *checking* or stoppage of certain bodily functions or of the flow of speech. The "flow" of sleep, smooth and peaceful, is interrupted, so that when *morning* comes, man has no more strength or vitality than the *grass* (vv. 4-5). The metaphor thus introduced is carried further; the herb that *blossoms* in the morning and goes on to reach its full development (for which the psalmist uses a term which also suggests "passing away"), languishes and *wITHERS* by night (v. 6). Thus do men pass away, and the only explanation the psalmist can find is the *anger* of God, through which men are *confounded* (v. 7). The ground for that *anger* is human *iniquity*—once more a contrast, this time between the purity of God and the foulness of man. We may seek to gloss over or to conceal the wrong that lies within us, but the very *face* of God is a *light*, a piercing sun, which reveals the blackest and most *secret* depths of the soul (v. 8).

The reason why the psalmist knows that God has taken his sins into account is that punishment has come. Death is the penalty for sin (again an implicit reference to the Paradise story of Gen. 3), and man's days *decline*, turning towards their evening, with such speed that there is time but for a single gasp, *a sigh* (v. 9). True, *seventy* or *eighty years*, as men count years, may be the allotted span, but the best of them, their peak and *pride*, is painful toil and empty *sorrow*, and the psalmist emphasizes the *swiftness* with which life is *cut off* by the use of two sharp, sibilant, monosyllabic verbs (v. 10).

Wistfully the poet turns back to God. If only men *knew the power of God's anger*, or *feared the stroke of his fury*, they might so live as to avoid at least excess of pain, even if death were still inevitable (v. 11). Therefore he prays for *teaching and wisdom* (v. 12), for that forgiveness which looks as if God *repented*. It is *love, hesed*, for which the spirit longs (v. 14). Much may yet be retrieved from the ruin of life, and the balance of suffering may be redressed, if Yahweh will but *gladden his servants*, and give them happiness equal in content and in duration to the misery that they have endured (v. 15). This will be God's true *working*, and the sign that he is active. But, above all, the psalmist pleads for something that will endure. If he and his contemporaries must pass away, at least let their *work* abide. Two millennia and more have passed since the poet wrote these words, and hitherto his closing prayer has been fulfilled. *The loveliness of the Lord* has been upon him, and the *work of his hands* has been *established*, for his prayer is still to-day among the best-known of all the outpourings of man's spirit.

### *Religious Teaching*

We cannot but be inspired by the psalmist's clear facing of the facts of life and death, and by his refusal to abandon his faith. God is still his dwelling-place and final hope, and, even if he does not see how all his problems are to be solved, he still trusts in the Lord, who has the solution to give. He is prepared to recognize that man is, at least in part, responsible for his fate, but his belief in Yahweh includes the confidence that this eternal God can and will forgive. But once more, as so often in reading the Old Testament, we realize that the most devout and sincere thought in Israel can be satisfied only with a doctrine of spiritual immortality.

## PSALM 91

THIS psalm is a polemic, in devotional form, against the means employed to counteract the assaults of demons. The belief in demons and their activity was shared by the psalmist in common with that universally held in his day; this is amply illustrated in the psalm itself, as the commentary will show. Where he differed from the bulk of his contemporaries was in the methods adopted to ward off demoniacal attacks. Not in formulas or by magic acts and enchantments, nor yet by the help of wizards and witches, was the malevolent activity of demons to be met, but only by placing oneself under the protection of Yahweh. This is the purpose and content of the psalm.

In Rabbinical literature the psalm is called "A song for evil encounters" (Bab. Talmud, *Shebuoth* 15b), and its use is recommended for the purpose of averting the attacks of demons.

The date of the psalm must, on account of the developed demonology among the Jews, be late, and may be assigned to the Greek period.

The metre is, with the exception of *vv.* 1, 15, uniformly 3 : 3.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. ° Blessed is he ° that abideth under the shelter of the Most High, | that lodgeth under the shadow of Shaddai,            |
| 2. ° That saith ° to Yahweh : " My refuge,                            | my fortress, my God, whom I trust °.                 |
| 3. For he delivereth thee from the net,                               | ° he preserveth thee ° from the destructive word ° ; |
| 4. With his pinion he covereth thee,                                  | and under his wings thou findest refuge ° ;          |
| 5. Thou wilt not fear the terror at night,                            | And the arrow that flieth by day,                    |
| 6. The pestilence that roameth in darkness,                           | or Qeteb that destroyeth at noon.                    |
| 7. A thousand shall fall beside thee,                                 | and ten thousand at thy right-hand,                  |
| To thee it shall not come nigh,                                       | ° a shield and buckler is his truth ° ;              |
| 8. ° (Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold,                         | and shalt see the recompense of the wicked.) °       |
| 9. For, as for thee, Yahweh is ° thy refuge °,                        | thou hast made the Most High ° thy stronghold ° ;    |
| 10. No evil shall befall thee,  | nor plague come nigh to thy tent ;                   |
| 11. For his angels he will give charge over thee,                     | to keep thee in all thy ways ;                       |
| 12. Upon their hands they will bear thee,                             | lest thou strike thy foot against a stone.           |
| 13. On lion and adder shalt thou tread,                               | shalt trample on young-lion and dragon.              |
| 14. " For on me he hath set-his-love, so will I deliver him,          | I will exalt him, for he knoweth my name.            |
| 15. He calleth me, and I will answer him,                             | Will be with him in trouble,                         |
| Will deliver him and honour him ;                                     |  |
| 16. I will satisfy him with length of days,                           | and cause him to see my salvation."                  |

#### Text-critical Notes

1. Insert אָשֵׁר ; as the Hebrew stands the syntax causes difficulty. 2. Read אָמַר for אָמַר " I will say ". 3. Read יִשְׁכְּרֵךְ for יִקְרֵשׁ " a fowler ". Read, with GS, דָּבָר דָּבָר " pestilence ". 4. Place צָנָה וְכִסְיָהּ אֶמְתֵּן " a shield and buckler is his truth ", at the end of *v.* 7. 8. Om. this *v.* as being out of harmony with the context. 9. Read מִבְּרָכָה for מִבְּרָכָה " my refuge ". Read, with G, מְעוֹנָה for מְעוֹנָה " thy habitation ".

1. The key-note of the psalm is struck in these opening words ; all the onslaughts of demons, referred to in the body of the psalm, will be averted if trust is placed in God. There is special significance in the use of the word *abideth*, which means, strictly speaking, " to pass the night " (see Gen. 19<sup>2</sup>, Judges 19<sup>13</sup>, 2 Sam. 17<sup>16</sup>) ; for it was especially at night-time that the demons' power was supposed to be greatest, and consequently their activity most pronounced. Hence it is especially at night-time that *the shelter of the Most High* must be sought for protection against demons. Parallel with this is the shadow of *Shaddai*, *šēl* (" shadow ") coming from the root meaning " to be dark ". It is probable that the use of the name *Shaddai* (" the Almighty ") for God here is intended to express the antithesis to *šēd*, " demon " ; this word occurs, it is true, only in Deut. 32<sup>17</sup> ; Ps. 106<sup>37</sup> ; in Jewish demonology, which was already fully developed in pre-

Christian times, one of the main categories into which demons were divided was that of the *šēdim*, whose leader was Asmodæus, mentioned in Tob. 3<sup>8, 17</sup> (circa 200 B.C.). On the other hand, one of the most prominent figures of the Babylonian spirit-world was *šēdû*, a kind of guardian-deity, usually in the form of *Lamassu* or bull-colossus.

In 2 the psalmist puts words into the mouth of him whose trust is in Yahweh, a contrast being intended between this attitude and that of those who employed the popular methods to ward off demoniacal attacks.

In 3-7 six kinds of such attacks are mentioned: *For he delivereth thee from the net*; emphasis is laid on *he*,—that is, Yahweh. The word for *net* (*pah*) is very rarely used in a literal sense, but frequently in reference to the plots and evil machinations of men; but in these verses there is nothing to show that the evils from which Yahweh gives protection have anything to do with the works of evil-disposed men; so that the mention of “the fowler” is out of place, and may well have been introduced by a copyist influenced by Ps. 124<sup>7</sup>, Hos. 9<sup>8</sup>. In view of the quite obvious reference to demons in the rest of these verses, there is justification for holding that the *net* here refers to the entanglement caused by a demon, or, more probably, as a parallel to the second half of the verse, to a demon incarnated in a witch. The ancient Arabs held that witches were the incarnations of demons; similarly the Babylonians taught that, like demons, witches took up their abode in forsaken sites; when a witch “spies” her victim, it is said, she “follows him”, “entangles his feet in her net” and “drags him to the ground”. The *destructive word* (see crit. note) refers to the spell, used by witches, which forced demons to do an injury, to cause sickness, or even to encompass the death of a person. These evils, the psalmist teaches, can be counteracted only by placing oneself under the protecting care of Yahweh: *With his pinion he covereth thee, and under his wings thou findest refuge*. Possibly there is a covert contrast intended here between the protecting wings of Yahweh, and those which some kinds of demons were supposed to possess; the demons used their wings to fly swiftly on their harmful errands; but under Yahweh’s wings the terror-stricken are safe. In the *Midrash* on the *Psalms* it is taught that “there is a harmful spirit that flies like a bird, and shoots like an arrow”; the reference is evidently to Lilith (Isa. 34<sup>14</sup>), the Night-hag, who, according to traditional Jewish belief, got her name from *lâyêlâh*, or *layîl*, “night”; the etymology was false (she was a Babylonian demon), but that does not affect the belief that Lilith was the night-demon *par excellence*. According to Jewish tradition, too, the meteor-stone was known as “the arrow of Lilith”. It is in the light of these beliefs, taken over from the Babylonians, that *the terror at night* and *the arrow that flieth by day* must be explained.

In connexion with the *pestilence that roameth in darkness*, reference must be made to the Babylonian pest-demon Namtar; in a Babylonian text it is said: "Wicked Namtar . . . who plagues a man like the pestilence, who has no hands, no feet, who goes about at night . . ." <sup>1</sup>; this is strongly reminiscent of the psalmist's words. Then, with regard to *Qeteb that destroyeth at noon*, it must be remarked, first, that the word, *Qeteb*, usually translated "destruction", occurs elsewhere only in Deut. 32<sup>24</sup>, Isa. 28<sup>2</sup>, Hos. 13<sup>14</sup>; in each case there are reasons for believing that the reference is to a demon. In the verse before us the Septuagint and Aquila both expressly make mention of a demon. In Rabbinical literature the verse is understood in this sense (e.g., Bab. Talm. *Pesahim* 111 b), and *Qeteb* is there used as the proper name of a demon. In the *Midrash* on the *Psalms* part of the comment on this verse runs, in reference to *Qeteb*: "Our Rabbis said, It is a demon (*šēd*) . . . The poisonous *Qeteb* was covered with scales and with hair, and sees out of only one eye, the other is in the middle of his heart; and he is powerful . . . and stalks about from the fourth to the ninth hour (i.e., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) from the 17th of Tammuz to the 9th of Ab (i.e., July and August); and everyone who sees him falls down on his face". These are traditional ideas, handed down for centuries.

The belief in innumerable hosts of demons goes back to a hoary antiquity; it is reflected in the Midrashic comment on this verse: "If a thousand evil spirits assemble at thy left hand they . . . and if ten thousand assemble at thy right hand they will fall . . ." It is the angels who overcome them, cp. v. 11. It will be seen that the words at the end of v. 4, *A shield and buckler is his truth*, come more appropriately here.

8-13. Following upon v. 7, the words of v. 9 come logically: *For, as for thee, Yahweh is thy refuge*; it is probable, therefore, that v. 8 is a marginal gloss which has found its way into the text. The theme of Yahweh's protection from demons is then continued. The ancient belief that before any dwelling-place is entered into, demons must be placated, occurs in the words: *Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent*. To *angels*, acting according to the divine behest, we have already referred, cp. Ps. 34<sup>7</sup>, Tobit 6<sup>12</sup>. On the quotation of vv. 11, 12 in Matt. 4<sup>6</sup>, Lk. 4<sup>10, 11</sup>, see Intro., Vol. I, p. 95.

According to ancient Semitic belief, a relationship existed between certain animals and demons, who appeared in the wilderness in the form of wild beasts; the closest connexion was held to be between demons and serpents; *jinn* and *ghūl* are synonymous with "serpent" in Arabic; hence the significance of: *On lion and adder shalt thou tread, shalt trample on young-lion and dragon*.

14-16. With words put into the mouth of Yahweh, the psalmist

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in full by O. Weber, *Dämonenbeschwörung* . . . in *Der alte Orient*, vii, p. 16 (1906).



### *Religious Teaching*

Of this it is unnecessary to say more than that trust in God avails to overcome every evil. This is illustrated in the psalm by references to various kinds of evil spirits, because belief in their activity was intensely prevalent in bygone days ; demoniacal onslaughts are rendered harmless when the protection of Yahweh is sought.

## PSALM 92

THE age-long problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous is, in this psalm, solved, according to the psalmist. He tells of his own experience ; he himself is a living illustration of a godly man prospering ; it may go well with the wicked, but that is merely temporary ; as the enemies of God destruction will come upon them soon enough. The psalm may be described as a summary of Ps. 37, see also Ps. 73. To be sure, this was no real solution of the problem, for many righteous suffer, and many wicked are permanently prosperous through life ; but the psalmist gives his own experience, and that sufficed for him.

The title of the psalm designates it as one for the Sabbath, so, too, in the Septuagint, but there is nothing in it which makes it specially appropriate for this day ; it has, however, together with Ps. 93, been one of the proper Sabbath psalms in the Jewish Church from time immemorial.

The metre is 3 : 3, excepting in *v.* 9 which is 3 : 3 : 3.

*A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath-day.*

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | (2). Good it is to give thanks to<br>Yahweh,  | and to sing praise to thy name, O Most<br>High,  |
| 2  | (3). To tell of thy lovingkindness in<br>the morning,                                     | and of thy faithfulness in the nights,<br>with soft playing on the lyre.               |
| 3  | (4). With a ten-stringed ° harp,  | I shout for joy because of the works of<br>thy hands.                                  |
| 4  | (5). For thou hast made me glad<br>° through thy doings °,                                | thy thoughts are very deep !<br>and a fool doth not understand it.                     |
| 5  | (6). How great are thy works, Yahweh,   | and all the workers of iniquity flourish,  |
| 6  | (7). A brutish man knoweth this not,  |  |
| 7  | (8). When the wicked sprout like grass,   | but thou art on high for evermore °.   |
| 8  | (9). It is ° only ° that they will be<br>destroyed for ever ;                             | for, lo, thine enemies shall perish,<br>° thou hast poured out upon me °<br>fresh oil. |
| 9  | (10). For, lo, thine enemies, Yahweh,<br>All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered ; | mine ears hear concerning them that<br>rise up against me.                             |
| 10 | (11). But thou hast exalted my horn<br>like a wild-ox,                                    | he groweth like a cedar in Lebanon ;   |
| 11 | (12). Mine eye gloateth over ° them<br>that watch for me °,                               |  |
| 12 | (13). The righteous flourisheth like a<br>palm-tree,                                      |  |

- 13 (14). They are planted in the house of Yahweh, they flourish in the courts of our God;  
 14 (15). Even in old age do they bear fruit, they are full of sap, and green,  
 15 16). ° Showing ° that Yahweh is my Rock is he, in him is no unrighteousness.

## Text-critical Notes

3. Om. with G, וְעַל "and upon". 4. Om. יְהוָה for the rhythm's sake. Read, with many MSS. and S, בְּפַעֲלֵי for לֵךְ — "thy doing". 8. Add מִן, for the construction see Ps. 37<sup>8</sup> Prov. 11<sup>24</sup>, etc. Om. יְהוָה for the rhythm's sake. 10. Read, with ST, בְּלִלְתִּי for בְּלִלְתִּי, "I am anointed". 11. Read, with the Versions, בְּשׁוֹרְרִי for בְּשׁוֹרְרִי; cf. Ps. 56<sup>2(3)</sup> 59<sup>10</sup> (11). Read עָלַי קָמִי (for this use of עָלַי see, e.g., Ps. 32<sup>4</sup>) for בְּקִמְיָם, "against them that rise up"; and omit מְרַעִים, "evil-doers", which overloads the half-line. 15. Lit. "to declare".

1-4. Most fittingly the psalmist begins his psalm with thanksgiving and praise, for he has been the recipient of many blessings; both *in the morning* and at *nights* does he *tell of the lovingkindness* which God has shown him. Though not actually mentioned, the reference to the temple later in the psalm (v. 13), makes it certain that *in the morning* and at *nights* implies the times of offering sacrifice, see Exod. 29<sup>29, 41</sup>, Num. 28<sup>4</sup>, so that in what follows we get some insight into the ritual which accompanied the sacrificial service. That prayer was offered during the offering of sacrifices we know; here we learn that the song of praise accompanied these offerings, and what the psalmist says is full of interest. The words of praise and thanksgiving, by which, of course, psalms are meant, were sung to the accompaniment of the *ten-stringed harp* (Ps. 33<sup>2</sup>, 144<sup>9</sup>), the large stringed instrument which rested on the ground, while the smaller harp, or *lyre*, was carried in procession (see, further, the notes on Ps. 150); the expression used in connexion with the latter, which we have rendered *soft playing*, comes from the root meaning "to moan", "murmur", and also "to muse" or "meditate"; it therefore implies subdued playing. Thus, the accompaniment of stringed instruments to the singing of psalms varied so as to be in harmony with the nature of the words sung. In these opening words, then, the psalmist tells of his daily praise to God in gratitude for the benefits which he has received. His temporal well-being and enjoyment of life are joyfully acknowledged as due to Yahweh's *doings*, and *the works of his hands*. 5. From this the psalmist turns to speak of other divine *works*, the outcome of his *thoughts that are very deep*. 6. Of these the man with merely animal instincts, the *brutish man* (cp. Pss. 49<sup>10</sup>, 94<sup>9</sup>) can know nothing; they are not understood by a *fool*—i.e., one who is stupid, dull of understanding. Of these *works* and *thoughts* the psalmist then speaks; and he proceeds (7, 8) to set forth what is to him the solution of the problem of the prosperity of the wicked, which had seemed to so many to be not in accordance with divine justice. The comparison of *the wicked* with *grass* points to the nature of his solution:

for a brief space the grass sprouts and flourishes; but how soon it fades (cp. Isa. 40<sup>7, 8</sup>)! Thus it is with the wicked; to those who, like the psalmist, look beyond the immediate present, the prosperity of the wicked is merely the prelude to their everlasting destruction; and then, with bated breath, as it were, the psalmist adds the tremendous contrast: *but thou art on high for evermore*. It must be recognized that here the psalmist, like the writer of the book of *Job*, was on the very verge of being forced into a fuller belief regarding the conditions of life after death; he speaks of the everlasting destruction of the wicked; but he says nothing about the righteous in the Hereafter, those who are faithful to Yahweh who is *on high for evermore*; the reason of this is that our psalmist was still held down by the traditional belief that "in death there is no remembrance of thee, in Sheol who can give thanks unto thee?" (Ps. 6<sup>5</sup>); he had not yet reached the sublime belief of the writer of Ps. 73<sup>23-25</sup>; but he was not far from it. The logic of religious belief should have led him, as one faithful to God *on high for evermore*, to the conviction that death could not break that relationship; but to that he had not yet attained. His thoughts were concentrated on this world. He goes on, therefore (9, 10) to contrast the lot of the *enemies* of Yahweh, who *shall perish and be scattered*, with that which he enjoys: *But thou hast exalted my horn like a wild-ox—i.e., like the horn of a wild-ox*. The picture expresses consciousness of strength; and, *thou hast poured out upon me fresh oil*, indicating gladness (cp. Ps. 45<sup>7</sup>). With pardonable exultation the psalmist adds (11) *Mine eye gloateth over them that watch for me*, for he had heard the envious words of *them that had risen up against him—i.e., his enemies*. Then (12-15) he describes further, in poetical language, the happy lot of the man—he is doubtless thinking of himself—whose godly life has brought him happiness: *the righteous flourisheth like a palm-tree*, a symbol of prosperity, its graceful form is referred to in *Song of Songs* 7<sup>7</sup>; *he groweth like a cedar of Lebanon*; another picture of stateliness (cp. Ps. 80<sup>10</sup>). This enviable state of the righteous, he goes on to explain, is because *they are planted in the house of Yahweh—i.e., from earliest days they have been constantly present in the temple*; hence, *they flourish in the courts of our God—i.e., they rejoice in being within the temple precincts*. It need hardly be said that trees did not grow within the temple area, as has sometimes been *naïvely* supposed, the words are purely figurative, as in Ps. 52<sup>8</sup>; the metaphor is continued in 14, like an aged, but healthy tree, so do the righteous *even in old age bear fruit, they are full of sap* (lit. "fat"), *and green*; a living proof *that Yahweh is righteous*, always to be relied upon like an impregnable *Rock* (cp. Ps. 31<sup>2</sup>, 62<sup>7</sup>, 71<sup>3</sup>); in him is no unrighteousness.

*Religious Teaching*

Apart from the problem of divine retribution which the psalmist believes himself to have solved, and to which we have made reference elsewhere, this psalm sets forth very beautifully the truth that temporal benefits are the gifts of God, and that gratitude for these must be expressed in praise to the Almighty. It is not too much to say that these things are but too often taken for granted, or ascribed to personal prowess and industry ; of course these have their part to play, the divine gift of free-will is accorded to every man ; but it must not be forgotten that all things are in the hand of God. This psalm should be read in the light of the words of the General Thanksgiving in the Prayer Book : " We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life."

## PSALM 93

THIS is the first of a group of eschatological psalms (93, 96-99) sung at the ceremony of Yahweh's Enthronement (Ps. 47 also belongs to the group) ; the phrase " Yahweh is become King " makes this clear. The subject is dealt with in Vol. I, pp. 48 ff., and need not be further enlarged upon here. The psalm concentrates on only one element in the great Eschatological Drama, and that in not more than a summary manner—namely, the victory of Yahweh over his enemies. This is described pictorially by the reference to the myth of the primeval combat when Yahweh overcame the evil powers symbolized by the waters of the Great Deep. For the interpretation of the psalm in an eschatological sense, see Vol. I, pp. 51 f.

The form in which the psalm is constructed is unique ; four short lines with two beats are followed in the rest of the psalm by single lines with three beats.

On the date of the " Enthronement " psalms, see Vol. I, pp. 44 ff.

1. Yahweh is become King,  
Apparelled in majesty,  
Apparelled is Yahweh,  
Girded with strength.
2. Yea, ° he hath established ° the world, it shall not be moved ;  
Established is his throne from of old,  
From everlasting art thou, ° Yahweh °.
3. The floods rose up, Yahweh,  
The floods raised up their roar,  
The floods ° raised up ° their crashing.
4. More (glorious) than the roar of many waters,  
° More glorious than the raging of the sea °,  
Is Yahweh, glorious on high.
5. Thy testimonies are very sure,  
Holiness becometh thine house,  
Yahweh, for evermore.

## Text-critical Notes

1. Read, with the Versions, הָיָה cf. 75<sup>3(a)</sup> for הָיָה "is established". 2. Add יָהִי as demanded by the rhythm. 3. Read, as in the other lines, נִשְׁאָר, lit. "were lifted up", for נִשְׁאָר "they lifted up". 4. Read אֲדִיר מִשְׁפַּרְיִים for אֲדִירִים מִשְׁפַּרְיִים, "glorious are the breakers of the sea".

1. For the phrase *Yahweh is become King*, and all that it involves, see Vol. I, pp. 46 f. The ancient myth of the starry heavens being the mantle of the mighty ruler above is here adapted and spiritualized, and Yahweh is thought of as *apparelled in majesty*, and *girded with strength*. In illustration of his majesty and strength, the psalmist points to *the world* which he set up, or *established*, in such a way that it cannot *be moved*; but the main thought lying behind the psalmist's mind is that it was established in the very far distant past; its age, therefore, witnessing to the eternity of Yahweh. This is brought out in what follows (2): *Established* (the same word as that used in reference to the world) *is his throne from of old*; its foundation is mentioned in 97<sup>2</sup>. That Yahweh has a throne in heaven is an idea borrowed from an extraneous source, and is connected, of course, with his Kingship; this has been dealt with in Vol. I, pp. 44 ff. But the world and the throne are as nothing in age compared with Yahweh, for he is *from everlasting*. 3, 4. One of the themes commemorated at the celebration of Yahweh's Enthronement is then briefly referred to, *the floods rose up* . . ., in reference to the primeval combat dealt with in the Babylonian Creation Epic (see above). Awe-inspiring as was the rush and *roar of many waters* and *the raging of the sea*, infinitely greater is *Yahweh, glorious on high*.

5. In sudden contrast to the tremendous scene just depicted, the psalmist transports his thoughts into calm waters; leaving the distant past, he thinks of the present, and of the attributes of Yahweh as now revealed: faithfulness and holiness. It can hardly be doubted that the psalmist intends here to place on record the difference between his conception of Yahweh and that presented in the ancient myth, or, rather, in its adaptation, by the prophets. If we are correct in this, it points to a decreasing importance attached to the old-world myths, and, in consequence, to a corresponding decrease in the need of commemorating them. In other words, the time was drawing near when the celebration of Yahweh's Enthronement was to be a thing of the past.

For the religious teaching of this psalm and others dealing with the same subject, see Vol. I, p. 81.

## PSALM 94

To regard this psalm as originally two distinct psalms—so, *e.g.*, Hans Schmidt—is quite unnecessary, and betrays a misunderstanding of the psalmist's mentality. The psalm witnesses to the presence among his people of men who are guilty not only of the most violent cruelty, but also of blasphemy against the God of their fathers. That they were Jews, and not aliens, to whom reference is made, is clear from their attitude towards, and the way in which they speak of, Yahweh; heathen oppressors would not be concerned with reviling the God of Israel in the way here described; he would simply not come into their consideration. These Jews were members of the higher grades of society, since they were in a position to oppress their less fortunate fellow-creatures; the epithet "proud", applied to them, and their arrogance, point in the same direction. The psalmist stands forth as the champion of the poor and oppressed, as did the prophets (cp. Isa. 1<sup>23</sup>, Jer. 22<sup>3</sup>, Ezek. 22<sup>7</sup>, Zech. 7<sup>10</sup>, Mal. 3<sup>5</sup>); like them, he does so with boldness, knowing that God is with him. The social conditions reflected in the psalm might point to various periods; but the mention of renegade Jews suggests that it belongs to the Greek period. Some commentators assign it to the Maccabæan age, but quite wrongly, for they do not sufficiently take into consideration the conditions of those times; the ruling powers were the Maccabæan leaders, loyal and God-fearing men, beloved of the people. Renegade Jews, to be sure, were in evidence, but they exercised no power, and were opposed by those in authority. Moreover, *vv.* 16–23 would be quite inappropriate at that time.

The metre is predominantly 3 : 3; but *vv.* 9–12 have two beats to the half-line; the change of metre, coinciding with a difference in subject-matter, is evidently intended to express special emphasis, and is very effective, above all when sung; for it can hardly be doubted that at the singing of these short periods the musical accompaniment underwent change.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. A God of vengeance is Yahweh;          | O God of vengeance, ° shine forth ° !  |
| 2. Lift up thyself, O Judge of the earth, | render to the proud their desert.  |
| 3. How long shall the wicked, Yahweh,     | how long shall the wicked exult ?  |
| 4. They brag, they speak arrogantly,      | they boast themselves, all the workers<br>of iniquity.   |
| 5. They crush down thy people, Yahweh,    | and thine inheritance they afflict ;   |
| 6. Widow ° and orphan ° do they slay,     | and murder ° the stranger and the<br>down-trodden ° ;  |
| 7. And they said : " Yah seeth it not,    | the God of Jacob observeth it not."  |
| 8. Be understanding, ye brutish ones      | yea, ye foolish ones, when will ye exercise<br>wisdom ?  |
| 9.  | He that planted the ear,<br>doth he not hear ?<br>He that formed the eye,<br>doth he not see ? |

10. He that instructeth the peoples,  
doth he not chastise?  
He that teacheth men,  
° should he not have knowledge? °
11. Yahweh knoweth  
the thoughts of man,  
that they are ° vain °.
12. Blessed is the man  
whom thou instructest, Yah,  
and teachest from thy law,
13. That he may have respite from evil days, till the pit be digged for the wicked,  
14. That Yahweh cast not off his people, nor forsake his inheritance,  
15. ° That the righteous may come to his own °, and his latter end (be) like the upright in heart °.
16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers, who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?  
17. Unless Yahweh had been my help, ° my soul had dwelt in silence.  
18. When I said: "My foot slippeth", thy love, Yahweh, upheld me.
19. When many were the anxieties within me, thy comforts refreshed my soul.  
20. Hath the throne of destruction ° fellow-ship with thee °, which frameth mischief against the statute?
21. ° They lie in wait ° against the soul of the righteous, and condemn innocent ° men °.
22. But Yahweh ° is ° my strong tower, and my God is the Rock of my defence;  
23. And he hath recompensed unto them their iniquity, ° and because of their wickedness ° he doth annihilate them,
- Yahweh, our God, doth annihilate them.

## Text-critical Notes

1. Read הוֹפִיעָה (cf. Ps. 80<sup>3</sup>) for הוֹפִיעַ, "he hath shined forth". 6. Read with G, וְזָרִים for וְזָר, "and stranger". Read, with Gunkel, following Zech. 7<sup>10</sup>, וְיָתֻמִּים for גֵּר וְיָתֵם, "and orphans". 10. Read הָיָה לְדַעַת for יָדַעַת, "knowledge"; as it stands the half-line is defective. 11. Lit. "breath". 15. Lit. "that his right may return unto the righteous", reading מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וְצִדִּיק. Read וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם for וְאַחֲרֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל, "and after him all the upright in heart". 17. Om. מְבֹשֶׁט, "soon", for the rhythm's sake. 20. Read הִיחַבְּרָה for הִיחַבְּרָה. 21. Read, with T, יִגְדְּרוּ (cf. Ps. 59<sup>1</sup>), for יִגְדְּרוּ "they gather themselves together". Read וְדָם for וְדָם, "and blood". 22. Read וְיָהּ for וְיָהּ, "but . . . hath been". 23. Read וּבְרָעָהֶם for וּבְרָעָהֶם, "and in their wickedness".

1-7. The righteous wrath of the psalmist explains the abrupt opening of the psalm; he calls upon Yahweh to reveal himself as the *God of vengeance* (cp. Deut. 32<sup>35, 41, 43</sup>), and to rise up as *Judge of the earth* in order to recompense the *proud* for their ill-doings. For the expression *shine forth*, used in reference to Yahweh as *Judge*, see Ps. 50<sup>1-4</sup>. The reference here is to the powerful rich among the Jews who *exulted* in their wealthy position and gloried in their evil doings, *speaking arrogantly* and *boasting themselves*; moreover, they had abused their power by maltreating the poor and helpless. *Thy people* and *thine inheritance* are generally used in reference to the nation as a whole, but they are also used at times in a restricted sense, as here (e.g., Hos. 10<sup>14</sup> and Deut. 10<sup>9</sup>), see also v. 7; *widow, orphan*, and *stranger* (cp. Isa. 10<sup>2</sup>), i.e., proselyte; that the oppressors are said to *slay* and *murder* their helpless victims is doubtless somewhat of an over-statement, due to

the psalmist's indignation. With the blasphemous assertion of the godless oppressors that *Yah seeth it not, the God of Jacob observeth it not*, cp. Ps. 10<sup>4, 11</sup>, 73<sup>11</sup>; *observeth it not* should perhaps be rendered "is without understanding", as it is the same word which is used in the next verse, where the *brutish ones among the people* are bidden to *be understanding*; the force of the epithet *brutish* is that it implies both cruelty and stupidity; as a parallel to *foolish* it occurs also in Ps. 49<sup>10</sup>, 92<sup>6</sup>. *When will ye exercise wisdom?* the psalmist asks; and in words of wisdom, he gives the reply himself, 9-11. The change of metre makes an effective emphasis. In question-form he exposes the foolish ignorance of these godless men. It was, moreover, an ignorance which was wilful, a deliberate ignoring of a truth of which they were certainly cognizant, for their question in v. 7 shows that they believed in the existence of the Creator. In the questions which follow, with their implied affirmatives in this case, we have an illustration of the mode of instruction so often employed by the Wisdom writers, doubtless in the following of the prophets (see, e.g., Isa. 10<sup>8-11</sup>, 58<sup>5-7</sup>, Jer. 3<sup>4-5</sup>, Ezek. 15<sup>2-5</sup>, Am. 3<sup>3, 6</sup>, 6<sup>12</sup>, and Prov. 8<sup>1</sup>, 22<sup>20, 21</sup>, 23<sup>29</sup>, 30<sup>4</sup>, Eccles. 2<sup>10</sup>, 10<sup>19</sup>, 18<sup>16, 17</sup>, 28<sup>3-5</sup>, etc.). A curious expression, which does not occur elsewhere, is used in the words, *He that planted the ear*; the idea is that of "fixing in", cp. Eccles. 12<sup>11</sup>, where the words of the wise are spoken of as "nails well fastened", lit. "planted"; neither this nor *He that formed the eye* is meant figuratively, the belief being that every human organ was separately created. The meaning of 10 is that Yahweh, who has the power of instructing all men, has also the power of chastising them when they ignore his instruction. As compared with the *knowledge* of Yahweh, whereby he *teaches* men, their *thoughts* are mere breath, *vain*, passing away and leaving nothing behind them. In contrast to the generality of men, the psalmist now speaks of the man who heeds the instruction of Yahweh, 12-15: *Blessed is the man whom thou instructest*. *Yah*, the abbreviated form of the divine name is again used. It is this true instruction and the observance of the *law* which uphold a man even in the *evil days*, for he knows that they will pass and that he will have *respite* from them; he can take heart in the conviction that *Yahweh* has *not cast off his people*, i.e., his own faithful ones; seeing that ultimately *the righteous will come to his own* (a free rendering, see text-crit. note), and that *his latter end* will be that of *the upright in heart* (an emendation of the corrupt Hebrew text). Finally (16-23) the psalmist speaks of his own experiences. He has been through dangers and has suffered in times of mental perplexity; but the *love* of *Yahweh* has ever *upheld* and *refreshed* him. In speaking to himself (20) he asks: *Hath the throne of destruction fellowship with thee*, an evil dominion which frameth mischief against the statute? The verse is difficult, and susceptible of more than one interpretation; but, paraphrased, it



seems to mean : Hast thou anything to do with that anti-God *régime* which sooner or later brings destruction because it is against the divine statute ? It is that followed by those who *lie in wait against the righteous* and the *innocent*. Among these latter the psalmist, with every justification, counts himself, and therefore he knows that *Yahweh* is his *strong tower*, his *Rock of defence*, and that he is safe ; but the wicked have been *recompensed for their iniquity, Yahweh doth annihilate them* ; the repetition of this at the end of the psalm, witnesses to what the psalmist has seen.

### *Religious Teaching*

If this partakes largely of the nature of warning, it is none the less important for that. Two attributes of God are set forth. The first is expressed by the phrase, the " God of vengeance ". While this form of expression betrays a somewhat too anthropomorphic conception of the Almighty, it seeks to place on record something that can be all too easily lost sight of by men ; it is necessary to insist sometimes on the truth that there is such a thing as divine retributive justice. It will not be denied that too frequently there is to be discerned an attitude of mind which is inclined to regard human weaknesses—in plain language, sin—as inevitable, and therefore excuseable. It is the counterpart of what in this psalm is recorded as obtaining in a rougher age. God who is righteous cannot condone sin ; nevertheless, punishment for sin is not an act of divine vengeance, but the ineluctable consequence of departing from the path of righteousness.

The other divine attribute which finds expression in this psalm, and very often in other psalms, is the love of God. On this man can always rely ; whether external troubles assail, or perplexities of mind cause worry and anxiety, he who brings them in trustful faith before God knows that, in the beautiful words of the psalmist, His love upholds, His comforts refresh.

### PSALM 95

THIS psalm consists of two clearly differentiated parts : a hymn of praise (*vv. 1-7<sup>a</sup>*), and an historical retrospect in the nature of a warning lest the people should follow the faithlessness of their forefathers in the wilderness. Owing to the mention of *Yahweh* as King, and to a very cursory reference to the creation of the sea and of the dry land, this psalm has been reckoned by some commentators as belonging to the " *Yahweh-is-become-King* " group. This is entirely uncalled for ;

the contention illustrates the way in which an idea will sometimes obsess the mind and upset the sense of proportion. Both the application of the title "King" to Yahweh, and references to his creative acts often occur without the slightest indication of the Enthronement theme; so, too, with regard to processions (see Vol. I, p. 51). The same is the case here.

The psalm was sung by worshippers on the way to the temple; they had gathered together for the purpose of celebrating the Sabbath; this is, at any rate, suggested by later usage among the Jews (B. Talmud, *Shabbath* 119a), and even at the present day it is one of the special psalms for Morning Prayer on the Sabbath. This usage has been followed by the Christian Church from very early times, though not restricted to the Lord's-Day worship. "Saint Benedict (*circa* A.D. 480-543), the founder of the Benedictine Order, directed that Ps. 95 (preceded by Ps. 3) should be said by the whole monastery together, when the monks first arose from sleep. It has been included in our English Matins from 1549 onwards."<sup>1</sup> The usage of the Christian Church may well have been founded on that of the Jewish Church.

To judge from the warning words of the second part of the psalm, it may well belong to the period some time after the building of the second temple; there are passages in Hag. 2, Mal. 2, 3, Trito-Isa. 57-59, which show the spiritual state of the people to have been similar to that which called forth the rebuke in the latter portion of the psalm. The date may thus be about the middle of the fifth century B.C., or possibly a little later.

The metre is 3:3 excepting in *v.* 7, where we have again the purposeful and effective lines with two beats.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. O come, let us sing to Yahweh,                     | let us cry out for joy to the Rock of our salvation.  |
| 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, | let us shout unto him with psalms.  |
| 3. For a great God is Yahweh,                         | a ° King above all gods.  |
| 4. ° In his hand are ° the ends of ° the earth,       | and the peaks of the mountains are his.   |
| 5. ° The sea is his, and he made it,                  | and the dry land,—he formed it.   |
| 6. Let us enter in, let us worship and bow down,      | let us kneel before ° our Maker :   |
| 7.  | For he is our God,<br>and we are ° his people °,<br>° and the flock of his pasture ° ;              |
| 8. " Harden not your heart as at Meribah,             | Would that to-day ye would hearken unto his voice :<br>as on the day of Massah, in the wilderness ; |
| 9. When your fathers tempted me,                      | where they tried me though they had seen my work.   |
| 10. Forty years had I loathing                        | ° against that generation °, and said :   |
| A people erring of heart are they,                    | and they have not known my ways ;   |
| 11. So that I swore in my wrath,                      | ' They shall not enter into my rest '."   |

<sup>1</sup> Barnes, *The Psalms*, Vol. II, pp. 456 f. (1931).

## Text-critical Notes

3. Om. the repetition of גָּדוֹל "great", which overloads the line. 4. Om. אֲשֶׁר "which", an unnecessary addition which overloads the line. Read, with G, מְרִמָּתָיו, lit. "the distant parts", for מְרִמָּתָיו, "the searchings". 5. Om. אֲשֶׁר (see above). 6. Om. יְהוָה, which gives too many beats to the half-line. 7. Read, with S, עַמּוֹ for עַם, "people". Read, with S, וְצֹאן מְרִעֵירוֹ for מְרִעֵירוֹ וְצֹאן, "his pasture and the flock of his hand". 10. Read, with the Versions, בְּדֹרֹר for בְּדֹרֹר, "against a generation".

1, 2. The throng of worshippers ascending the temple-mount encourage each other with the words: *O come, let us sing to Yahweh, let us cry out for joy to the Rock of our salvation*; with this last expression, cp. Ps. 89<sup>28</sup>, indicating firm reliability; they say: *let us shout unto him with psalms*; this noisy mode of worship, as it appears, is thoroughly characteristic of emotional Orientals. 3-5. In the light of what is said in the second part of the psalm, there is a special significance in the reminder to the people, sung perhaps by a leader, that *a great God is Yahweh, a King above all gods*; the temptation to worship other gods was one to which the people during post-exilic times were often subject; and the reference to the hardening of their hearts in the wilderness (v. 8) points to a lack of faith in Yahweh. The further emphasis on the creative acts of Yahweh was doubtless due to the same cause; the people were losing hold of their faith in him who was the Creator of all things. Perfunctory as the worship was which they offered, they nevertheless made their pilgrimage up to the temple; but more than mere observance was required; the outward acts of worship were to be the earnest of genuine belief: 6. *Let us enter in, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before our Maker*. 7. And once more the leader reminds his people that Yahweh is their God, and that they belong to him: *He is our God, and we are his people*. Then comes what is at once a pleading and a warning: *Would that to-day ye would hearken unto his voice* (cp. Ps. 81<sup>8</sup>); this, together with what follows, being addressed to the processionists, will have been sung by a priest standing at the entrance to the temple; he puts the words into the mouth of the Almighty; there is much in the section reminiscent of Ps. 81<sup>7-13</sup>. For *Meribah and Massah*, see Exod. 17<sup>7</sup>, Num. 20<sup>8-13</sup>, *my work* is in reference to the smiting of the rock in Horeb, when Yahweh "stood before" Moses. But it was not only on that occasion that the Israelites *hardened their heart*; during the whole of the *forty years* Yahweh *had loathing* against them; this is the force of the Hebrew word. The abrupt ending of the psalm with the words, *so that I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest'*, sets in relief the stern warning directed, by implication, against those who were now standing at the entrance to the temple. By *rest*, or *resting-place*, the promised land was originally meant (cp. Deut. 12<sup>9</sup>), but the psalmist uses it in a more spiritual sense;

perhaps, in view of Isa. 32<sup>18</sup>, where the word occurs, it is used here in an eschatological sense, as there.

### *Religious Teaching*

Especially to be noticed here is the way in which the joy in worship is emphasized; this is engendered by the conviction of the divine presence. The true worship of him who is all-powerful and all-loving will of necessity inspire happiness. On the other hand, the psalm contains a warning for every age; mere external acts of worship, without sincerity of heart, become a mockery. The true rest of God can be the lot of those only who worship him "in spirit and in truth".

## PSALM 96

THE phrase "Yahweh is become King", occurring towards the end of the psalm (*v.* 10), marks it as one of those which were sung during the ceremony of Yahweh's Enthronement. Praise to Yahweh is, therefore, the main content of the psalm. But it contains incidental references to other themes belonging to the New Year Festival psalms, thus showing that the Enthronement ceremony was one belonging to the New Year celebration, and not a self-contained festival. While the whole psalm bears, mostly by implication, an eschatological character, it is only in the concluding verses that this becomes definite in expression.

Curiously enough, in the long psalm of thanksgiving in 1 Chron. 16<sup>8-36</sup>, purporting to have been sung "before the ark of Yahweh", in the time of David, our psalm is embodied almost entire; borrowings from Pss. 105, 106 also appear. The fact, however explained, must warn us against being too dogmatic about the use of these "Enthronement" psalms.

The date is post-exilic, but much of the material is, of course, much earlier; see further, Vol. I, pp. 45 ff.

The metre is somewhat irregular, varying between 3 : 3 and 4 : 3; the irregularity may be due to the fact that the psalmist borrows so much, *e.g.*, with *vv.* 7-9 *cp.* Ps. 29<sup>1a</sup>.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Sing to Yahweh a new song,                            | sing to Yahweh, all the land,             |
| 2. Sing to Yahweh, bless his name,                       | show forth his salvation from day to day; |
| 3. Declare among the nations his glory,                  | among all the peoples his wondrous works. |
| 4. For great is Yahweh, and highly to be praised,        | terrible is he beyond all gods;           |
| 5. For all the gods of the peoples are things of nought, | but Yahweh made the heavens;              |
| 6. Honour and majesty are before him,                    | strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. |
| 7. Render to Yahweh, ye kindreds of the peoples,         | render to Yahweh glory and strength,      |

8. Render to Yahweh the glory of his name,  
 9. Worship Yahweh in holy array,  
 10. Declare among the nations: Yahweh is become King,  
 11. Let the heavens be glad, let the earth rejoice,  
 12. Let the field exult, and all that is in it,  
 13. Before Yahweh, for he cometh,  
 He judgeth the world in righteousness,
- bring gifts and enter his courts.  
 °entreat his favour °, all the earth.  
 °he hath established ° the world, it shall not be moved. °
- let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.  
 °yea °, let all the trees of the forest shout for joy  
 for he cometh to judge the earth;  
 and the peoples in his faithfulness.

## Text-critical Notes

9. Read *הָלֵלוּ פָּנָיו* (cf. Zech. 7<sup>2</sup> and Ps. 119<sup>58</sup>) for *חִילֵּוּ מַפְּנָיו*, "tremble before him". 10. Read, with the Versions, *הָיָה* (see Ps. 93<sup>1</sup>) for *הָיָה-יְהוָה*, "Yea . . . is established". Om., see 1 Chron. 16<sup>31</sup>, *וְיָרִין עַמִּים בְּמִישְׁרִים*, "he shall judge the peoples with equity". 12. Read *הֵן* for *הֵנָּה*, "then".

1-3. The threefold repetition: *Sing to Yahweh*, giving a jubilant tone to the psalm at the outset, indicates its nature and purpose—viz., praise to Yahweh. It is a *new song* (cp. Ps. 33<sup>3</sup>, 98<sup>1</sup>), which the psalmist has composed for the occasion, others having, of course, been long in use. *All the land* is bidden to take part in this hymn of praise; by the *land* is meant the land of Israel, which is to *declare among the nations his glory, among all the peoples his wondrous works*; the works of Creation are meant: but, above all, *Yahweh made the heavens*. 4-6. In speaking of *all the gods of the peoples as things of nought*, the psalmist has doubtless such passages as Isa. 40<sup>19</sup> <sup>a</sup>, 41<sup>23, 24</sup>, 46<sup>5-7</sup>, and especially 44<sup>9</sup> <sup>a</sup>, in mind; in spite of this, however, he believes in the existence of such gods; Yahweh is *terrible beyond all gods*; but in comparison with Yahweh they are *things of nought*. In contrast to these gods the psalmist thinks of the beautiful ministers that wait upon Yahweh; as often in the psalms, abstract things are personified, so he says: *Honour and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary*. 7-13. The knowledge of Yahweh having been brought to the nations by Israel, according to the envisaging of the future by the psalmist, they are now called upon to worship him. Very interesting to note here is what we might call the order of service at the ceremony of the Enthronement of Yahweh: first, the act of homage: *Render to Yahweh glory and strength—i.e.*, acknowledge those external qualities which belong to Yahweh as supreme; then an act of praise: *Render to Yahweh the glory of his name—i.e.*, acknowledge the glorious power of his name (cp. Ps. 29<sup>2</sup>); utterance is followed by action, and the next rite in the service was to *bring gifts and enter his courts*; the offerings were brought into the temple courts and received by the Levites, who prepared them for the altar, and presented them to the priests who then offered them on the altar. Those who brought their offerings are bidden to *worship Yahweh in holy array—i.e.*, to be clothed in garments appropriate

to the occasion (cp. Ps. 29<sup>2</sup>); of what kind these were it is not possible to say, but it is conceivable that the reference is to a wide mantle (*p<sup>e</sup>thigil*)<sup>1</sup> mentioned in Isa. 3<sup>24</sup>. And finally, there is the act of prayer: *entreat his favour*. Thus, homage, praise, offerings, prayer, may well have been the order of service during this particular ceremony; further rites are not mentioned here; but that these took place is indicated in other psalms of this type. One thing that one cannot well help noticing is the incidental and secondary way in which the phrase "Yahweh is become King", is mentioned in our psalm. It tends to bear out what we have already more than once insisted on, that the Enthronement ceremony was not a self-contained festival, but that it was celebrated during the New Year Festival observed at the Feast of Tabernacles. It is here that the eschatological character of the psalm becomes particularly evident; the psalmist envisages the future consummation when Yahweh's rule will become world-wide. *Declare among the nations: Yahweh is become King*, he has *established the world*. But the Kingship of Yahweh is too stupendous a thing for man alone to herald with joy; *the heavens* above are called upon *to be glad*, and *the earth* to *rejoice*, *the sea* to *roar* in delight, *the field* to *exult*, and *all the trees of the forest* to *shout for joy*, in the presence of *Yahweh*; for he is about to come as Judge, and his judgements will be *in righteousness* and *faithfulness*.

For the religious teaching of this psalm, and others of the same type, see Vol. I, pp. 40 ff.

## PSALM 97

THE opening phrase of this psalm, "Yahweh is become King", followed by some apocalyptic pictures, clearly indicates its eschatological character; but the present is also largely dealt with. The apocalyptic elements are echoes of early traditional ideas applied to eschatological expectations.

There is to some extent a lack of logical thought-sequence, and the impression is gained that familiar phrases have been gathered together rather than that the psalmist has composed an original poem; but in one respect this psalm stands out as of prime importance; for the psalmist shows a striking independence of thought by the way in which he sets forth and reiterates the conception of Yahweh's ethical righteousness. In this respect the psalm surpasses all others of eschatological content.

The date of these "Enthronement" psalms is dealt with in Vol. I, pp. 46 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Nowack, *Hebräische Archäologie*, Vol. I, p. 125 (1894).

The metre is for the most part 3 : 3 ; but *vv.* 1, 2 are respectively 4 : 3 and 3 : 4, and *vv.* 8 and 10 are respectively 3 : 3 : 3 and 4 : 3 : 3.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Yahweh is become King, let the earth rejoice,   | let the multitude of the isles be glad.                      |
| 2. Clouds and darkness are round about him,        | righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne ; |
| 3. Fire goeth before him,                          | and burneth his adversaries round about.                     |
| 4. His lightnings lighten the world,               | the earth seeth it, and trembleth,                           |
| 5. The mountains melt like wax °,                  | before the Lord of all the earth.                            |
| 6. The heavens declare his righteousness,          | and all the peoples behold his glory.                        |
| 7. All that serve graven images shall be ashamed,  | that boast themselves in things of nought,                   |
|  | ° Worship him, all ye gods °.                                |
| 8. Zion heareth, and is glad,                      | the daughters of Judah rejoice,                              |
|  | Because of thy judgements, Yahweh ;                          |
| 9. For thou °art the Most High over all the earth, | thou art exalted far above all gods.                         |
| 10. Yahweh ° loveth them that hate ° evil,         | he keepeth the souls of his godly ones                       |
|  | He delivereth them from the hand of the wicked.              |
| 11. Light ° ariseth ° upon ° the righteous,        | and joy to the upright of heart.                             |
| 12. Rejoice in Yahweh, O ye righteous,             | and give thanks to his holy ° name °.                        |

#### Text-critical Notes

5. Om., a gloss which overloads the half-line, מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה, "from before the presence of Yahweh". 9. Om. the repetition of יְהוָה. 10. Read אֶתְּךָ, making Yahweh the subject ; and, with some MSS and S, read שִׁנְאֵי for שִׁנְאֵי. 11. Read, with one MS and the Versions, זָרַע for זָרַע, "is sown". Read לָ for לָ, "to". 12. Lit. "memorial", see exeg. note.

1-6. The eschatological character of the psalm is indicated by the opening words that as *Yahweh is become King*, therefore *let the earth rejoice* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>11</sup>), and *let the multitude of the isles be glad* (cp. Isa. 51<sup>5</sup>, 60<sup>9</sup>), meaning, of course, their inhabitants. Such a thought envisages the future divine dominion over the whole world, a central theme in the Eschatological Drama. The psalmist then depicts how Yahweh will appear, terrible and glorious, when he comes to possess the world : enveloped in *clouds and darkness* (cp. Ps. 18<sup>11</sup>), with an all-devouring *fire before him* (cp. Ps. 50<sup>3</sup>), *his lightnings*, bursting forth from the dark clouds (cp. Ps. 77<sup>18</sup>), shoot through the world, terrifying all men, *the earth seeth it, and trembleth* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>9</sup>), *the mountains melt like wax* (cp. Judg. 5<sup>6</sup>) before him who is *Lord of all the earth* (cp. Mic. 4<sup>13</sup>, Zech. 4<sup>14</sup>, 6<sup>5</sup>). The picture is a terrifying one ; the more striking is it that there should be introduced into the middle of it what appears, at first sight, to be a somewhat incongruous thought : *righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne* ; but it is just this disregard for congruity which witnesses to the presence in the psalmist's mind of his dominating thought, the ethical righteousness of Yahweh. The same is true of the words in 6 which are likewise out of harmony with their context : *the heavens declare his righteousness* ; the context speaks of the melting mountains, on the one side, and of *all the peoples* who *behold his glory*,

on the other; so that here again what is foremost in the psalmist's mind comes to the fore. 7-12. A sudden change of subject then occurs; the denunciation of *all that serve graven images*, and *that boast themselves in things of nought*, was doubtless inspired by Isa. 44<sup>9a</sup> and similar passages; and the apparent contradiction between the *things of nought* and the words, *worship him, all ye gods*, has its parallel in Ps. 96<sup>4, 5</sup>. Then, in 8, we have another change of subject, reverting to the psalmist's dominating thought; the *judgements of Yahweh*, the outcome of his righteousness, make *Zion glad* and *the daughters of Judah rejoice*; the words are taken from Ps. 48<sup>11</sup>; by *the daughters of Judah* are meant the daughter-cities of Zion, conceived of, metaphorically, as the mother of the whole people (cp. Ps. 87). Once more, in 10-12, the psalmist speaks of the righteousness of Yahweh in the words: *Yahweh loveth them that hate evil, he keepeth the souls of his godly ones*; "souls" has here, as often elsewhere, the sense of individuality; on "godly ones" see Vol. I, pp. 56 ff.; similarly, in saying that *Light ariseth upon the righteous, and joy to the upright of heart*, it is meant that the light and the joy come from him who is the Author of all righteousness. And finally, when *the righteous* are bidden to *rejoice in Yahweh*, and *give thanks to his holy name*, it is because he is the source of their righteousness, and that his name embodies the revealed character of Yahweh as righteous (see, e.g., Isa. 57<sup>15</sup>).

For the religious teaching of the psalms of this type see further Vol. I, pp. 44 ff.

## PSALM 98

THAT this psalm should be reckoned among those belonging to the "Enthronement of Yahweh" group is justified by the reference to the "King" in verse 6; its purely eschatological content also marks it as one of this type. As always in psalms of an eschatological character, the belief expressed in the future consummation of the present world-order is so firmly held that it is envisaged, after the prophetic style, as having already come to pass; hence the use of the verbs in the perfect tense in vv. 1-3; and it is no incongruity when in vv. 7, 8 the present tense occurs, and in v. 9 the future; the changes simply reflect the writer's variation of envisagement.

The points of contact between this psalm and Ps. 96 will be noticed in comparing them.

On the date, see Vol. I, pp. 44 ff.

The metre in vv. 1-3 is 3 : 2, an extra two-beat line occurs in v. 2; but in the remainder of the psalm it is 3 : 3.



## A Psalm.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Sing to Yahweh a new song,<br>His right-hand hath holpen him,<br>2. Yahweh hath made known his salvation,<br><br>3. He remembered his love and his<br>faithfulness,<br>All the ends of the earth have seen<br>4. Make a joyful noise unto Yahweh, all<br>the earth ;<br>5. Sing praise to Yahweh with the harp,<br>6. With trumpets and the blast of the<br>ram's-horn,<br>7. Let the sea roar, and the fulness there-<br>of,<br>8. Let the streams clap their hands,<br>9. Before Yahweh, for he cometh,<br>He judgeth the world in righteousness, | for he hath done marvellous things ;<br>and his holy arm.<br>before the eyes of the nations hath he<br>revealed his righteousness.<br><br>to the house of Israel ;<br>the salvation of our God.<br>break forth, shout for joy, and sing<br>praise ;<br>with the harp and the sound of praise ;<br><br>make a joyful noise before the King ° ;<br><br>the world and the dwellers therein ;<br>let the mountains shout for joy together.<br>° for he cometh ° to judge the earth ;<br>and the peoples with equity. |
|--|--|

## Text-critical Notes

6. Om. יְהוָה, which overloads the half-line. 9. Add, as in Ps. 96<sup>13</sup>, בִּי נָחַם.  
 " for he cometh ".

1-3. Like Pss. 96 and 98, this is another *new song* composed for the celebration of the "Enthronement" ceremony; since it was an annual celebration, it was but fitting that new psalms should be composed for the occasion. The special reason for singing praise to Yahweh here given is that *he hath done marvellous things* (cp. 96<sup>3</sup>). The originally anthropomorphic expressions, *his right-hand and his holy arm*, are here used in a purely spiritual sense of Yahweh's will and power. The *marvellous things* to which the psalmist refers are embraced in the word *salvation* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>2</sup>); this includes both deliverance from external evils as well as spiritual blessings; these, which have been vouchsafed to *the house of Israel*, have been *made known before the eyes of the nations* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>23</sup>), to whom has also been *revealed* Yahweh's *righteousness*, frequently used as a parallel to *salvation* (e.g., Isa. 51<sup>6</sup>). *Love* and *faithfulness* are the things that belong to *salvation*, the remembrance of them, i.e., the lavishing of them upon *the house of Israel*, is the act of *righteousness*. This has been seen by *all the ends of the earth*. Here we have, then, a very interesting illustration of the combination of the particularistic conception of Israel as the people of God, and the universalistic conception of all peoples being brought to the knowledge of Yahweh. There is no sort of doubt that this beautiful thought originated, under God, with Deutero-Isaiah.

In the second part of the psalm (4-8), therefore, *all the earth* is called upon to rejoice that the knowledge of God, *the salvation of Israel's God*, has been vouchsafed unto them, and to join with the people of Yahweh in worshipping him: *Make a joyful noise unto Yahweh, all the earth ; break forth, shout for joy, and sing praise*. That the psalm is to be understood in an eschatological sense comes out here clearly, for the joining together

of all the earth in worship with Israel could be possible only with the final advent of Yahweh as King of all the earth; and thus, the Enthronement ceremony, which is now referred to, was what we may call a prophetic representation of Yahweh's ultimate entering upon his world-dominion: *With trumpets and the blast of the ram's-horn, make a joyful noise before the King.* Other eschatological conceptions follow: *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>11</sup>), i.e., all that is in it; *streams* are to *clap their hands*, an action of exultation, *mountains* to *shout for joy*; in a word, the whole Creation is bidden to rejoice in the advent of the King: *for he cometh, for he cometh, to judge the earth, in righteousness and equity* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>13</sup>); the reign of universal peace, justice, and happiness has begun in the psalmist's prophetic vision.

### PSALM 99

ONCE more an "Enthronement" psalm, the last of the group, opening with: "Yahweh is become King". It differs, however, from other psalms of the type in the attitude adopted towards the Gentiles; they are not bidden to rejoice over Yahweh's dominion, but to tremble; and there is in general a sterner note. Then, again, the eschatological *traits* are less prominent than in the related psalms; but this is not to deny its eschatological character, which is clear from the mention of Yahweh's exaltation over all peoples, and the call to them to praise his name; and the phrase "let the earth shake" is thoroughly eschatological. As in Ps. 97, emphasis is laid on the righteousness of Yahweh, though not to the same extent as there. The psalm consists of two parts, vv. 1-5 and 6-9, each concluding with a refrain. The text of vv. 3, 4 has suffered some disorder; for the emendations see the text-critical notes.

The metre is irregular.

For the date, see Vol. I, pp. 44 ff.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Yahweh is become King, let the peoples tremble,   | ° he sitteth upon ° the cherubim, let the earth shake.       |
| 2. Yahweh is great in Zion,                          | and exalted is he above all the peoples;                     |
| 3. Let them praise ° his name °, great and terrible, | holy is he, 4. ° and a mighty King °;                        |
| "° Thou hast established equity ° in Jacob °,        | justice and righteousness ° hast thou ordained."             |
| 5. Exalt Yahweh our God,                             | and worship at the stool of his feet,                        |
| ° For holy is Yahweh our God °.                      |  |
| 6. Moses and Aaron among his priests,                | and Samuel among those that called upon his name,            |
| They called unto Yahweh, and he answered them;       |  |
| 7. In the pillar of cloud spake he unto them,        | ° they heard ° his testimonies and the statute he gave them; |

8. "Yahweh, our God, thou didst answer a forgiving God hast thou been to them,  
 Yet an avenger of ° all ° their doings."  
 9. Exalt Yahweh, our God, and worship at his holy hill,  
 For holy is Yahweh our God.

## Text-critical Notes.

1. Read יָשָׁב עַל for יָשָׁב, "sitting". 3. Read שְׁמוֹ for שְׁמֶךָ, "thy name".  
 4. Read, with Gunkel, וְעֵז מַלְכָּהּ for וְעֵז מַלְכָּהּ "and the strength of a king".  
 Om., with Gunkel, מִשְׁפָּט אֲחָב, "justice he loveth". Add בִּינְיָאֵל. Om.  
 בִּינְיָאֵל. 5. Read as in v. 9 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. 7. Read שְׁמֵעֵנוּ for  
 שְׁמְרֵנוּ, "they kept". 8. Add, with G, קָלִי.

1. *Yahweh is become King* is, instead of, as in Ps. 97<sup>1</sup>, a cause for rejoicing among the peoples, an event inspiring fear among them: *let the peoples tremble*. Again, in place of the majestic picture of Yahweh's throne given in Ps. 97<sup>2</sup>, it is here said that *he sitteth upon the cherubim* (cp. Ps. 80<sup>1</sup>). The mention of these mythical beings is an illustration of the utilization of very ancient material of which this group of psalms is full. Mediated doubtless through Ezek. 1, the idea of the cherubim is of Accadian origin, and went through various stages of development; originally they were guardians who stood at the entry of temples; their guardianship of the Ark (Exod. 25<sup>19, 20</sup>) points, however, to Egyptian influence. In the v. before us the implication probably is that the cherubim were the guardians of Yahweh's throne. To discuss their further functions would take us too far afield (see Gen. 3<sup>24</sup>, 1 Kgs. 6<sup>23a</sup>, Ps. 18<sup>10</sup>, Ezek. 10<sup>1a</sup>, 41<sup>18, 19</sup>). When it is said further in our psalm, *let the earth shake*, the thought in the mind of the psalmist may conceivably be that of the mighty throne-chariot of Ezek. 1, the rumbling of which makes the earth to shake. But however this may be (2), the centre of Yahweh's dominion is Zion: *Yahweh is great in Zion*; to say that "here is the tone of Jewish exclusiveness" is simply to misunderstand the whole purport of the psalm; Yahweh is here enthroned, *exalted above all the peoples* as Israel's God, no doubt, but also as the God of all the peoples; the tone is not one of exclusiveness, but of universalism. It may well be that those commentators are right who explain Zion here as the heavenly Zion; Yahweh, enthroned in heaven, rules over all the world. Therefore it is said, in reference to *all the peoples*: *Let them praise his name* (cp. Ps. 111<sup>9</sup>), which is *great and terrible* (cp. Deut. 10<sup>17</sup>); and of Yahweh himself: *holy is he* (cp. Isa. 6<sup>3</sup>) and *a mighty King*; the phrase occurs in Isa. 19<sup>4</sup>, but not in reference to Yahweh. Further attributes of Yahweh are that he has *established equity in Jacob*, implying that he will do so in all the world; similarly with *justice and righteousness*, which he has *ordained*. This ethical righteousness of Yahweh is also emphasized in Ps. 97<sup>10, 11, 26</sup>. 5. The first part of the psalm closes with the refrain: *Exalt Yahweh our God, and worship at the stool of his feet, for*

*holy is Yahweh* (cp. Isa. 66<sup>1</sup>, "the earth is my footstool"). 6-9. This second part of the psalm, though of a very different character from the first, is, nevertheless, directly connected with it, because it tells of the great figures who in the past had been Yahweh's ministers and had *called upon his name*; it is in the following of such that all the peoples were bidden, in the first part (v. 3), to "praise his name". Moses as well as Aaron are reckoned *among his priests*; Moses is not elsewhere spoken of as a priest, but he performs priestly functions in Exod. 24<sup>8-9</sup>, 40<sup>22-27</sup>, Lev. 8<sup>10</sup> (cp. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, pp. 194 ff. [1925]); he is mentioned, together with Samuel, in Jer. 15<sup>1</sup> as those who "stood before me". The inclusion of Samuel in connexion with *the pillar of cloud* must be due to some legendary tradition. There is a little difficulty about the meaning of 8; we take it to mean that *Yahweh did answer them*, i.e., Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, when they pleaded to him for their people, and that he had been a *forgiving God* to them, i.e., the people; nevertheless, when the people persisted in evil-doing, Yahweh was *an avenger of all their doings*. The psalm concludes with a somewhat similar repetition of the refrain in v. 5.

For the religious teaching of the psalm, see Vol. I, pp. 74 ff.

## PSALM 100

As the psalm itself indicates, it was sung by a procession of worshippers as they drew near to the gates of the temple to sacrifice the thank-offering. It is thus purely liturgical in character. Its brevity points to its being introductory to the sacrificial service. It is reminiscent of Ps. 95. The contention that the psalm belongs to the Enthronement group is quite beside the mark; there is nothing in it that suggests this.

The date is certainly post-exilic.

The metre is three beats to short lines, with the exception of the last verse, which, as in many other psalms, differs from the rest.

### *A Psalm. For the Todah.*

1. Shout for joy to Yahweh, all the land,
2. Serve Yahweh with gladness,  
Enter into his presence with a ringing cry.
3. Know that Yahweh he is God,  
He made us, and we are ° his °,  
His people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4. Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
His courts with praise,  
Give thanks unto him, bless his name.
5. For Yahweh is good,  
His love is eternal,  
And his faithfulness is for all generations.

## Text-critical Notes

3. Read, with the *Q<sup>re</sup>* and many MSS, וְלֹא for וְלֹא, "and not" (so *K<sup>thibh</sup>* GS). "According to the Masora, וְלֹא is found fifteen times for וְלֹא", GK 103g.

The title indicates that the psalm was for the *Todah*, "thank-offering"; this does not necessarily mean that it was sung during the sacrifice; the psalm suggests that it was introductory to the ceremony.

1. As in Ps. 95<sup>1, 2</sup> we have here the loud lifting-up of the voices in worship (see also *v.* 2); by *all the land* is to be understood the land as a whole, represented by the assembled worshippers, who, as in Ps. 95, formed a procession ascending the temple mount. Emphasis is again laid on joy in worship, *shout for joy*; and (2) *serve Yahweh with gladness*; the Hebrew word for *serve* is used technically of serving God in worship (cp. Exod. 3<sup>12</sup>, Isa. 19<sup>21, 23</sup>). *Enter into his presence* is similarly a technical liturgical term (cp. Exod. 28<sup>30</sup>, it occurs also in Ps. 95<sup>6</sup>, 96<sup>8</sup>). *V.* 3 is similar in thought to 95<sup>5-7</sup>. In 4 *thanksgiving* is used in a general sense, but indicates the service for which the worshippers are to *enter his gates* and *his courts*. For the exhortation to *bless his name* cp. 96<sup>2</sup>. Very beautifully does the psalm conclude with the recognition of the *goodness* and *love* and *faithfulness* of Yahweh.

The religious teaching of this psalm is similar to that of Ps. 95, excepting for the absence of the warning note there sounded.

## PSALM 101

THE content of this psalm shows that it is the utterance of one who has been made a ruler, and who, on assuming his position of authority, makes a declaration in which he expresses the principles whereby he will be guided in the exercise of his new duties. Whether the ruler in question was a king or a provincial governor is uncertain, but the latter is more likely, for the despotic Oriental king would not have thought it necessary to ingratiate himself among his subjects by making a declaration of this kind. The last verse sounds, it is true, more like the utterance of a king; but the words are not meant to be taken literally, they are in the nature of hyperbole, a form of expression not infrequently used by the psalmists.

The possibility must, however, be recognized that we have here a composition in which a psalmist has set forth an idealistic conception of rulership, putting the utterances in the mouth of an imaginary potentate. This seems to us, upon the whole, to be the true interpretation of the psalm.

But whichever interpretation be the correct one, the two opening

verses constitute a difficulty; for they imply that the psalm was to be sung in praise of Yahweh's mercy and justice, whereas in the psalm itself there is no word of this, and the name of Yahweh does not occur again. This difficulty may be explained on the supposition that the edifying contents of the psalm induced some later psalmist to adapt it to liturgical use by altering the opening words to an appropriate form for worship. Hence the emendations adopted in our rendering of these verses.

In seeking to assign a date to the psalm, much depends upon how it is interpreted. If it refers to a king, the date is obviously pre-exilic; but if a provincial governor is in question, a post-exilic date is more likely—he might well have been a Jew, cp. Gedaliah (2 Kgs. 25<sup>22</sup>); the idealistic conception set forth suggests the later date.

The metre is 3 : 2.

*David's. A Psalm.*

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. ° I will exercise ° mercy and justice,                        | ° I will take heed unto Yahweh °; |
| 2. I will act wisely in an upright manner<br>of life,            | ° truth shall abide with me °;    |
| I will walk in integrity of heart                                | within my house,                  |
| 3. I will not set before mine eyes<br>An act of apostasy I hate, | a base thing;                     |
| 4. A perverted heart shall depart from me,                       | it shall not cleave to me;        |
| 5. He that secretly ° slandereth ° his<br>neighbour,             | I will not know evil.             |
| He that hath an high look, and an<br>arrogant heart,             | him will I destroy;               |
| 6. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful<br>in the land,          | I will not suffer.                |
| He that walketh in a perfect way,                                | that they may dwell with me,      |
| 7. Not in my house shall he dwell                                | he shall minister unto me.        |
| He that speaketh lies shall not be<br>established                | that acteth deceitfully,          |
| 8. Every morning will I destroy                                  | before mine eyes.                 |
| To cut off from the city of Yahweh                               | all the wicked of the land;       |
|  | all the workers of iniquity.      |

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Read, with Gunkel and Hans Schmidt, אָנָשָׁה (cp. 1 Sam. 20<sup>14</sup>, 2 Sam. 10<sup>2</sup>) for אֲשִׁירָה, "I will sing"; and לִיהוָה אֲשַׁמְרָה for לִיהוָה אֲזַמְרָה, "to thee Yahweh will I sing praise" (see further, the intr. section). 2. Read, with several commentators, מָתַי תָּבוֹא אֵלַי for אֲמַת תָּבוֹא אֵלַי, "when wilt thou come unto me?" 3. Lit. "to do swervings" in reference to swerving from allegiance to Yahweh. 5. Read מְלוֹשְׁנֵי for the form מְלוֹשְׁנֵי.

The whole psalm consists, as we surmise, of the words of a ruler, ideally conceived of by the psalmist. 1. He *will exercise mercy and justice*, and in doing so he will be observing the precepts of Yahweh. 2-4. In these *vv.* the ruler concentrates upon the guiding principles whereby he will be actuated: wisdom in thought and act constitute the foundation principles in the ruler who is determined to live *in an upright manner of life* (lit. "perfect way"). For this, *truth* is, of course, a prime requisite (for the emendation see text-crit. note); it is personified, as virtues often are by the psalmists, and it is spoken as abiding with him.

In the privacy of his *house* he *will walk in integrity of heart*; he will, that is to say, entertain thoughts which are good and noble, and will not even contemplate a *base thing*, lit. "a thing of Belial", by which is meant anything and everything suggestive of evil; the word means lit. "worthlessness", but it has also the sense of "wickedness" (see Prov. 6<sup>12</sup>); in later times it became a proper name synonymous with Satan (often in the apocalyptic literature, and cp. 2 Cor. 6<sup>15</sup>, also in Rabbinical literature). The worst type of such an evil thing is disloyalty to Yahweh, *an act of apostasy I hate*; that he will not entertain, *it shall not cleave to me*; in post-exilic times, when the Jews lived under Gentile suzerainty, the temptation to apostasy was especially rife among the ruling classes owing to their necessary contact with the officials of the suzerain power; so that the words in the psalm are very significant. Apostasy was the mark of a *perverted heart* (cp. Prov. 11<sup>20</sup>), or "crooked" thoughts; that *shall depart from the godly ruler*; he refuses to have anything to do with such an *evil*. In the verses which follow, 5-7, the ruler speaks alternatively of those whom he abominates, and those whom he will favour. Of the former is the *slanderer*, through whose wickedness the innocent so often suffered; and the proud (lit. "high of eyes", cp. Prov. 21<sup>4</sup>), who oppressed the helpless. But he will look favourably on those who are *faithful in the land, i.e.*, those upon whom he can rely for their loyalty to him; they shall  *dwell*  with him because they walk aright, and can be trusted to serve him. On the other hand, he *that acteth deceitfully shall not dwell* in the ruler's house, nor can *he that speaketh lies* look for favour from him. 8. The zeal for righteousness by which the ruler is actuated is drastically expressed; but the words are not to be taken literally.

### *Religious Teaching*

From the nature of the psalm the religious element is not prominent; but the insistence on the ruler's loyalty and faithfulness to Yahweh is very fine, and a notable way-mark for all in authority.

### PSALM 102

THAT this psalm is not a unity becomes evident as soon as one compares vv. 12-22 with the rest of the psalm; for these verses break the continuity of, and have nothing in common with, vv. 1-11, 23-28. The insertion may perhaps be accounted for by the desire of a compiler to place in contrast the shortness of human life (v. 11) with the eternity of Yahweh (v. 12), a point of contact being thus established with the latter part of

the psalm (*vv.* 26, 27); but otherwise the insertion presents conditions which differ entirely from the rest of the psalm. In its original form our psalm is the outpouring of one who is the victim of sickness and enmity; the inserted portion speaks of the desolation of Zion, but expresses the hope of better times, and may thus possibly be part of a psalm belonging to early post-exilic times, but see further *exeg. notes*. The date of the main portion cannot be determined with any degree of certainty; all that can be said is that the thought-connexions with other psalms which are post-exilic would point to this period, though later than the inserted portion. The metre is 3 : 3 with some variations; this applies to the whole psalm as it stands.

*1. A Prayer of an afflicted one when down-cast and he poureth out his trouble before Yahweh.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 (2). Yahweh, hear my prayer,              | and let my cry come unto thee.             |
| 2 (3). Hide not thy face from me            | in the day of my distress, ° Yahweh ° ;    |
| Incline thine ear unto me,                  | when I call, haste to answer me ;          |
| 3 (4). For my ° inward parts ° waste        |  |
| away ° like smoke ° ,                       | and my bones glow like a hearth.           |
| 4 (5). Smitten like grass ° is my heart,    | for I forget to eat my food.               |
| 5 (6). ° I am weary ° with the sound of     |  |
| my groaning,                                | ° my flesh cleaveth to my bones ° ;        |
| 6 (7). I am like a pelican in the wilder-   |  |
| ness,                                       | I am like an owl in ruined places ;        |
| 7 (8). I watch ° and I groan ° ,            | like a solitary bird on the house-top.     |
| 8 (9). All the day mine enemies reproach    | they that boast themselves against me      |
| me,   | take an oath with me ° .                   |
| 9 (10). For I eat ashes like bread,         | and I mingle ° my drink ° with weeping,    |
| 10 (11). Because of thine indignation and   | for thou didst take me up, and didst cast  |
| thy wrath,                                  | me away.                                   |
| 11 (12). My days ° decline ° like a shadow, | and I am withered like grass.              |
| 12 (13). But thou, Yahweh, abidest for      |  |
| ever,                                       | and thy memorial from generation to        |
| 13 (14). Thou wilt arise and have mercy     | generation ;                               |
| on Zion,                                    | ° for the time is come to be gracious      |
| 14 (15). For thy servants have a delight in | unto her ° ,                               |
| her stones,                                 | and look graciously upon her dust,         |
| 15 (16). Then shall the nations fear ° thy  |  |
| name ° ,                                    | and all the kings of the earth thy glory.  |
| 16 (17). For Yahweh doth build up Zion,     | ° and shall appear ° in his glory ° in the |
|   | midst of her ° .                           |
| 17 (18). He hath regard unto the prayer of  |  |
| the destitute,                              | and despiseth not ° their supplication ° : |
| 18 (19). Let this be written down for the   | and a people that shall be created shall   |
| generation to come,                         | praise Yah,                                |
| 19 (20). For he looked down from his holy   |  |
| height,                                     | from heaven ° he beheld the earth,         |
| 20 (21). To hear the sighing of the         |  |
| prisoner,                                   | to release ° those condemned to death ° ,  |
| 21 (22). That the name of Yahweh may be     | and his praise in Jerusalem,               |
| proclaimed in Zion,                         | and the kingdoms, to serve Yahweh.         |
| 22 (23). When the peoples are gathered      |  |
| together,                                   | ° a cutting-off of my days is decreed for  |
| 23 (24). ° My strength too soon is ex-      | me ° ;                                     |
| hausted ° ,                                 | thy years are throughout all ° genera-     |
| 24 (25). ° Snatch me not away ° in the      | tions ° .                                  |
| ° midst ° of my days,                       | and the heavens are the work of thine      |
| 25 (26). Of old thou didst found the earth, | hands ;                                    |



- 26 (27). They shall perish, but thou endurest<sup>o</sup>;      yea, they all shall wear out like a garment,  
 Like a vesture dost thou change them, and they are changed;  
 29. The children of thy servants shall continue<sup>o</sup>;      28. but thou,—thy years have no end. and their seed shall be established before thee.

## Text-critical Notes

2. Add יהיה for the rhythm's sake. 3. Read מַעַי, as a better parallel, for יָמַי, "my days". Read, with many MSS and the Versions, קָעָשָׁן for קָ, "in smoke". 4. Om., as overloading the half-line, וַיִּבֶשׁ, "and withered", probably an explanatory gloss on חִיָּקָה, an unusual form. 5. Add, with some commentators, נִגְעָתִי (cp. Ps. 6<sup>o</sup>), for the rhythm's sake; a verb has obviously fallen out. Read דְּבַקָּה עֲצָמִי לְבִשְׁרִי for דְּבַקָּה לְעֲצָמִי בִשְׁרִי "my bones cleave to my flesh", cp. Lam. iv. 8. For עֲצָמִי in a collective sense, with the predicate in fem. sing., see GK 122s 145k. 7. Read, for the rhythm's sake, and to complete the half-line, וְאֵהְיֶה with two beats, for וְאֵהְיֶה, "and I am become". 8. See exeg. note. 9. Read שְׁקִינִי. 11. Read נָשִׁי, making לִמִּי the subject, for נָשִׁי. 13. Read לְחִנְקָה עֵת פִּי־כָא עֵת, omitting פִּי and מוֹעֵד, which overloads the half-line. 15. Read, with GS, שְׁמֹךְ for שְׁמֵ יְהוָה, "the name of Yahweh", which overloads the half-line. 16. Read, with Duhm, וְנִרְאָה (so G) and add בְּקִרְבָּה. 17. Read, cp. G, וְנִחְנָקֵם, to avoid the repetition of the same word. 19. Om. יְהוָה for the rhythm's sake. 20. Lit. "the sons of death". 23. It is difficult to make sense of this v. as it stands; read עֲנָה בְּדֶרֶךְ פָּחִי, lit. "my strength is humbled (cp. Lev. 23<sup>29</sup>) in the way", i.e., in the midst of life. Read, cp. GS, חֲנֹךְ לִמִּי נֶאֱמַרְלִי; for this use of נֶאֱמַר see 1 Kgs. 11<sup>18</sup>, 2 Chron. 29<sup>24</sup>. 24. Lit. "lift me not up", cp. 2 Kgs. 2<sup>1</sup>. Lit. "half". Read, with S, לְדֹר, בְּדֹר. 26. Lit. "standest", for this use of עָמַד cp. Isa. 66<sup>22</sup>, Jer. 32<sup>14</sup>. 29. Lit. "dwell", for this sense of שָׁכַן see Judg. 5<sup>17</sup>.

For the title, see Vol. I, p. 19.

Unlike most of the titles of psalms, which purport to indicate authorship or to give musical directions, this title describes the character of the psalm.

1-11. The plaint poured forth in these verses is one of the most poignant of the many which find expression in the Psalter. In his *distress* the psalmist cries, *Yahweh, hear my prayer*, but his trouble is such that his thoughts become concentrated on his state of suffering. The somewhat exaggerated utterances used witness to the intensity of that suffering, which is both physical and mental. 3. A burning fever makes him compare his whole body to a consuming fire, his *inward parts* and his *bones glow like a hearth* heated by the flames. Then he turns to his mental sufferings; 4. the *heart* is the seat of the emotions, and the simile, *smitten like grass*, in reference to the effect of the scorching sun, expresses a despairing mental state in which ordinary wants are forgotten: *I forget to eat my food*; 5. so much so, and here he speaks again of physical suffering, that his *flesh* seems to *cleave* to his *bones*. Then (6), turning once more to his mental suffering, he feels so utterly forsaken that he compares himself with a *pelican in the wilderness*, or an *owl in ruined places*; the word rendered "pelican"

is of uncertain meaning; it is a water-bird, and therefore hardly likely to dwell in the wilderness; owls habitually took up their abode in ruins (cp. Isa. 34<sup>11</sup>). 8. His suffering is aggravated by his boastful enemies, who use his name in *an oath*, whereby they could bring a curse upon him, as was believed; *with me*, means with my name. In 9-11 the psalmist, by implication, reveals the reason why he has been stricken; he has sinned, and has brought down upon himself God's *indignation* and *wrath*; but he is repentant, sitting in *ashes*, and *weeping*, expressed hyperbolically in the words: *I eat ashes like bread, and I mingle my drink with weeping*, i.e., with tears. From here we go to v. 23 (vv. 12-22 will be dealt with below). In his sickness and despair, the psalmist feels that his end is near: *My strength too soon is exhausted* is a free rendering (see text-crit. note), it expresses the conviction that his days are numbered, *a cutting-off*, i.e., shortening, *of my days is decreed for me*. 24. Nevertheless, he prays that he may yet live, and not be suddenly *snatched away*, a very forcible expression, meaning lit. "lifted up" from the earth. This leads him to speak of the endless years of the Almighty, 25-28; far back in time, immeasurable in length, God already lived, when he created *the earth* and *the heavens*; but even they will pass away in the far-distant future; *but thou—thy years have no end*. This thought of God's eternity induces a feeling of comfort: though his days may be numbered, the descendants of the *servants* of God *shall continue*, and *their seed be established before him*. Some commentators hold that v. 29 does not belong to the original psalm; and it is true that v. 28 makes a more logical and impressive close; but it must be remembered that the Oriental is not always strictly logical in his thought-sequence.

Turning now to the inserted portion, 12-22; its beginning, *But thou, Yahweh, abidest for ever*, implies some preceding verses, so that it would seem to be an extract from some other psalm. The picture presented is that of Zion in ruins, but the conviction is expressed that Yahweh will have *mercy* on her, and *build her up*; when that time comes *the nations will fear the name* of Yahweh, for he will *appear in his glory in the midst of her*; we have here an eschatological *trait* due to prophetic influence. The difficulty is to ascertain to what period the ruined state of Zion, here depicted, is to be assigned; that of the Exile, or soon after, naturally suggests itself, especially as there are various thought-contacts with Deutero-Isaiah. On the other hand, the psalmist's indebtedness to other psalms, of later post-exilic date, forbids this date. A Maccabæan date has been suggested, but the description of Zion given in 1 Macc. 1<sup>33</sup> and elsewhere, compared with what is said in v. 14 of our psalm, shows the untenability of the suggestion. The probability is that, as in the case of some other psalms, the reference here is to the inroads of the Persian army under Artaxerxes III Ochus (see further

Vol. I, p. 72). However this may be, the faith of the psalmist in Yahweh is indestructible: *He hath regard unto the prayer of the destitute, and despiseth not their supplication*; so firm is the psalmist's certitude that the prayer will be answered that he wishes it to be written down in order that in later days men may know of it, and *praise Yah.* 19-22. The subject of the prayer is then recorded in a form which takes for granted that it is answered, although actually it is in the future that this will be done.

### *Religious Teaching*

What the psalm teaches in this respect is the same as that which occurs in many others, and which is dealt with in the relevant sections. It will suffice, therefore, briefly to mention three points. First, there is the earnest appeal to God when in trouble; in this case, as so often elsewhere, the trouble is occasioned by sickness and by the cruel behaviour of enemies; it will be noticed that here, unlike so many other psalmists, no divine punishment is called down upon the enemies. A further cause of the psalmist's trouble is a spiritual one, the bitterness of a contrite heart. The second point, though occurring in other psalms, is especially marked here—namely, the opening out of the heart to God, telling him, as to a dear and intimate friend, all his innermost feelings; this is the most touching and appealing element in the religious teaching of the psalm. And, finally, there is that beautiful *trait*, so characteristic of the godly Israelite, of the certainty that prayer will be answered; of this we have illustrations in many other psalms.

### PSALM 103

IN words as beautiful as any in the Psalter, the psalmist tells of the love of God towards those who fear him. This love is shown forth, above all, by the divine longsuffering and forbearance towards sinful humanity. That the psalmist speaks as an individual, and not as representing the community, needs no insisting on; the first five verses should make this clear enough. The contrary is maintained by some commentators because of the mention of "our sins", "our iniquities", "our transgressions"; but this does not make the psalm any the less personal; just as when one prays "Our Father", the prayer is that of an individual on behalf of himself, even though "us" and "we" occur in it. It is a striking *trait* in the psalmist that he feels his gratitude for the love of God to be so inadequate, however earnest, that he calls upon the heavenly host to bless Yahweh, so that spiritual beings may join with

him in blessing God. The conception of sin, and the influence of some of the later books, mark the date of the psalm as post-exilic. The occurrence of several Aramaisms points in the same direction.

The metre is almost wholly 3 : 3.

*David's.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Bless Yahweh, O my soul,                                     | yea, ° all within me °, his holy name.  |
| 2. Bless Yahweh, O my soul,                                     | and forget not all his benefits :   |
| 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities,                          | who healeth all thy diseases,   |
| 4. Who redeemeth thy life from the Pit,                         | who crowneth thee with lovingkindness<br>and tender mercies,                                      |
| 5. Who satisfieth thee with good ° as<br>long as thou livest °, | so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.  |
| 6. Yahweh executeth righteous acts,                             | and justice for all that are oppressed.   |
| 7. He made known his ways unto Moses,                           | his doings unto the children of Israel.   |
| 8. Merciful and gracious is Yahweh,                             | long-suffering, and plenteous in loving-<br>kindness ;  |
| 9. ° For ° he chideth not for ever,                             | nor is he resentful everlastingly.  |
| 10. He doth not deal with us according to<br>our sins °,        | nor doth he recompense us according to<br>our iniquities °.                                       |
| 11. For as high as the heavens above the<br>earth,              | so ° high ° is his love over them that<br>fear him ;  |
| 12. As far as the east from the west,                           | so far hath he put our transgressions<br>from us ;  |
| 13. As a father hath compassion on his<br>children,             | so hath Yahweh compassion on them<br>that fear him ;  |
| 14. For he knoweth our frame,                                   | he remembereth that we are but dust.  |
| 15. As for man, his days are like grass,                        | as a flower of the field, so doth he<br>flourish,<br>and the place thereof knoweth it no<br>more. |
| 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is<br>not,             | and his righteousness is to children's<br>children,   |
| 17. But the love of Yahweh is ° on them that<br>fear him,       | to them that remember his statutes, to<br>do them.  |
| 18. To them that keep his covenant ° and<br>his commandments °, |   |
| 19. Yahweh in the heavens hath established<br>his throne,       | and his kingdom ruleth over all.  |
| 20. Bless Yahweh, ye angels of his,                             | ye, mighty in strength, that fulfil his<br>command ° ;  |
| 21. Bless Yahweh, all ye ° his host °,                          | ye servants of his that do his will.  |
| 22. Bless Yahweh, all ye his works,                             | in all places of his dominion.  |
- Bless Yahweh, O my soul.

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Read פִּלְיָהָרָבִי for פִּלְיָהָרָבִי as הָרָב is never used in the plur. 5. Read, cp. Ps. 104<sup>88</sup>, 146<sup>3</sup>, עֲדִינָה for עֲדִינָה, "thine ornament". 9. Add, with S, פִּי for the rhythm's sake. 10. Om. לָנוּ, "to us", for the rhythm's sake. Om. עֲלֵינוּ, "upon us", for the same reason. 11. Read נָבִיחַ for נָבִיחַ, "is mighty". 17. Om. מְעוֹלָם וְעַד-עוֹלָם, "from everlasting to everlasting", which overloads the half-line. 18. Add יִמְצִיאוּ, see Deut. 7<sup>2</sup>; the half-line is too short as it stands. 20. Om. with S, לְשָׁמַע בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ, "to hearken unto the voice of his word", a marg. gloss. 21. Read צְבָאוֹת for צְבָאוֹת; the plur. of צָבָא is צְבָאוֹת (so the *Kethibh*), cp. Ps. 148<sup>3</sup>.

1-5. As in the opening words of Ps. 104, the psalmist exhorts his own *soul* to *bless Yahweh*. The further calling upon his whole inner being to bless his *holy name* illustrates the Hebrew conception of man's being; it is not only the heart (*lēb*), which is the seat of the emotions and thoughts, for *all within me* comprises also the "kidneys", or

"reins" (*k'lâfôth*), parallel with the heart, e.g., Jer. 11<sup>20</sup>, 17<sup>10</sup>; the "liver" (*kâbêd*), in Lam. 2<sup>11</sup> it is said to be "poured out", i.e., in sorrow; and the "bowels", (*mê'im*), which is also parallel to "heart" e.g., Jer. 4<sup>19</sup>, as a seat of the emotions; included also are the "bones" (*âzâmôth*), cp. Ps. 6<sup>2</sup>, 35<sup>10</sup>, where they are parallel with the "soul" (*nephesh*). Another, though rare, expression, which would seem to be parallel to *all within me*, is *tûhôth*, "inward parts", lit. the things "covered over", which occurs in Ps. 51<sup>8</sup> and in Job 38<sup>36</sup>. It will thus be seen how full of meaning the psalmist's expression was to him. His further exhortation to himself, *forget not all his benefits*, is again very significant, first, because of his frank implication of his liability to forget, and also because of the nature of these benefits, which he then proceeds to describe. They are both spiritual, *who forgiveth all thine iniquities*, and temporal, *and healeth all thy diseases*, the word is always used in the literal sense of sickness (cp. 2 Chron. 21<sup>19</sup>, Jer. 14<sup>18</sup>, 16<sup>4</sup>); both kinds of benefits are further enumerated in vv. 4, 5. The divine lovingkindnesses are then more fully described (6-13) in words of sublime beauty. All is summed up in: *Yahweh executeth righteous acts*. From the days of *Moses*, to whom he revealed himself, he showed forth *his doings*, i.e., his righteous acts; to *the children of Israel*, too, *he made known his ways*. All centres in the blessed truth that *merciful and gracious is Yahweh*. The verses which follow require no exegetical notes; their exquisite beauty seems to forbid comment, they are so self-expressive; all that we would add is that they, as it were, forestall the apostolic words: "God is love". And this is only enhanced by what follows, 14-16, where the infinitude of the love of God is shown forth by the almost contemptible littleness of them upon whom it is expended—*dust, grass*; what a grand insight was vouchsafed to the psalmist in recognizing how pitifully insignificant man must be in the sight of God, but for his love. 17, 18. Nevertheless, in spite of this, *the love of Yahweh is on them that fear him*; self-evident though it may be that Yahweh's love can find expression only on them that fear him, the psalmist feels impelled to remind men of it; their part of the *covenant* made with them, solely out of divine love, must be kept, and *his statutes* observed. Let them remember, too, the psalmist seems to say, that they are the subjects of a Heavenly King: *Yahweh in the heavens hath established his throne, and his Kingdom ruleth over all*. Then (20-22), in holy exaltation of spirit, he calls upon the glorious angelic host to *Bless Yahweh*; and wheresoever in the illimitable space of his dominion his works are manifest, let all and everything *Bless Yahweh*; and in soul-felt gratitude and adoration he repeats once more: *Bless Yahweh, O my soul*.

The religious teaching of this psalm, with its beautiful witness to the love of God, is so fully expressed all through that a further section

on this could add nothing. Let the psalm be re-read, which will more than suffice.

### PSALM 104

THE central theme of this psalm is the glorification of Yahweh for his creative work, and the continued existence of the earth, and all that is in it, by his will. Of particular interest is the psalmist's utilization of extraneous material; here we have echoes of the ancient Iranian conception of the Deity being clothed in light; of the Babylonian myth of the wings of the south wind (mentioned in the *Adapa*-myth); of the *Tehom*-myth; and of some others. And, above all, there appears to be some actual borrowing from the ancient Egyptian hymn of praise to the sun-god; this was composed by the Pharaoh Amenophis IV (Ikhnaton), who reigned 1375-1358 B.C.<sup>1</sup>; vv. 1-5, 10-26 of our psalm contain many parallels with this. The psalmist's knowledge of all these things is very remarkable; other psalms contain references to one or other of them, but this psalm is unique for the wealth of such references which it contains. There are certain points of contact between this psalm and Ps. 103, but it will be noted that while in the latter Yahweh is praised as the God of History, here it is as the God of Nature that he is magnified.

Very fine as this psalm is, one cannot get away from the fact that the psalmist gives expression to some *naïve* ideas of his own; this is altogether in the nature of things; but the fact must be recognized.

The exceedingly old-world ring of the psalm suggests a pre-exilic date; the general considerations regarding the dates of the psalms, so instructively set forth by Gunkel-Begrich in their *Einleitung*, § 12, leads to the same conclusion. Bittenwieser, too (*op. cit.*, pp. 161 ff.), argues for a pre-exilic date; though his arguments are sometimes weak, he makes out a good case on the whole.

The metre is, with but few exceptions, 3 : 3.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Bless Yahweh, O my soul;<br>Thou art clothed with majesty and<br>honour,<br>Who spreadeth out the heavens like a<br>canopy,<br>Who maketh clouds his chariot, | ° my God, thou art very great;<br>2. ° thou coverest thyself ° with light as<br>with a garment;<br>3. who layeth the beams of the upper<br>chambers in water,<br>who goeth forth on the wings of the<br>wind,<br>fire ° and flame ° his ministers. |
| 4. Who maketh winds his messengers,<br>5. ° Who founded ° the earth upon its<br>pillars,   | it moveth not for evermore.  |

<sup>1</sup> Quoted below, p. 444.

6. Tehom ° covered it ° like a garment,  
 7. At thy rebuke they fled,  
 8. ° They went up to ° the mountains,  
     To the place which thou hadst founded for them ;  
 9. A bound thou didst set which they  
     should not pass over,  
 10. He sent forth springs in the valleys,  
 11. They give to drink to all the beasts of  
     the field,  
 12. Beside them the birds of the ° air °  
     abide,  
 13. He watereth the mountains from his  
     upper chambers,  
 14. He causeth the grass to grow for the  
     cattle,  
     He causeth ° moisture ° to come forth  
     from the earth,  
     To make his face to shine through oil,  
 16. The trees of Yahweh are sated,  
 17. Where the birds make their nests,  
 18. The mightiest mountains are for the  
     wild goats,  
 19. ° He made ° the moon for (indicating)  
     seasons,  
 20. Thou makest darkness that it may be  
     night,  
 21. The young lions roaring after their  
     prey,  
 22. ° Thou causeth the sun to rise °, they  
     get them away,  
 23. Man goeth forth unto his work,  
 24. How manifold are thy works, Yahweh,  
 25. There is the sea, great and wide,  
     Beasts small and great,  
 26. There go ° the sea-monsters °,  
 27. These all wait upon thee,  
 28. Thou givest it to them, they gather it  
     up,  
 29. Thou hidest thy face, they are  
     dismayed,  
     And unto their dust they return ;  
 30. Thou sendest forth thy breath, they  
     are created,  
 31. May the glory of Yahweh endure for  
     ever,  
 32. Who looketh on the earth, and it  
     trembleth,  
 33. I will sing to Yahweh while I live,  
 34. May my meditation be pleasing unto  
     him,  
 35. May sinners be consumed from the  
     earth,  
     Bless Yahweh, O my soul.  
     Hallelujah.
- upon the mountains did the waters  
 stand ;  
 at the sound of thy thunder they hurried  
 away,  
 they went down to the valleys,  
 nor cover the earth again.  
 they run among the mountains ;  
 the zebras ° quench ° their thirst ;  
 from among the branches they give  
 forth ° their song °.  
 ° from the moisture of thy heavens °  
 the earth is sated.  
 and herb ° for the service of ° man ;  
 15. and wine that rejoiceth the heart of  
     man,  
 and bread to strengthen man's heart.  
 the cedars of Lebanon which he planted,  
 (and) the stork, the fir-trees are ° its  
 dwelling-place °.  
 the rocks a refuge for the badger.  
 ° he made the sun to know ° its going  
 down ;  
 when all the beasts of the forest creep  
 forth ;  
 to seek their meat from God ;  
 and they lay them down in their dens.  
 and to his labour until the evening.  
 ° the earth is full of ° thy creatures ° :  
 wherein are things creeping innumera-  
 ble,  
 in wisdom hast thou made them all ;  
 Leviathan, whom thou madest to sport  
 therein.  
 that thou mayest give them their food  
 in due season ;  
 thou openest thine hand, they are  
 satisfied with good.  
 thou withdrawest their breath, they die,  
 they return ;  
 and thou renewest the face of the earth.  
 may Yahweh rejoice in his works ;  
 he toucheth the mountains and they  
 smoke.  
 I will sing praise to my God while I  
 have my being.  
 I will rejoice in Yahweh.  
 may the wicked be no more.

## Text-critical Notes

1. Om. the repetition of יהוה for the rhythm's sake. 2. Read תַּעֲשֶׂה for עֲשֶׂה, "covering", i.e., that coverest. 4. Read וְלֹהֵט for לֹהֵט, "flaming." 6. Read בְּסִתְּהֶם (both סִתְּהֶם and פְּסִתְּהֶם are fem.). 8. Read, with Gunkel, יַעֲלֶה for יַעֲלֶה, the subject is "the waters", as לֵהֵם shows. 11. Lit. "break". 12. Lit. "heavens". Read קוֹלֶם for קוֹל "song", lit. "voice". 13. Read, with Budde and Hans Schmidt, מִפְּרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ for מִפְּרֵי שְׁמִיךָ "from the fruit of thy works" (see, further, exeg. note). 14. Read לַעֲבֹדָה (cp. Gen. 26<sup>14</sup>, Job 1<sup>3</sup>) for לַעֲבֹדָה "for the labour". Read לֶחֶם for לֶחֶם, "bread". 17. Lit. "its house". 19. Point again as partic. עֹשֶׂה. Read, cp. G, יָדַע for יָדַע "he knoweth". 22. Read תִּזְרֹחַ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ for . . . תִּזְרֹחַ "the sun ariseth". 24. As this v. has a half-line too much, and one is wanting in the next v., place, with Gunkel, עֲשִׂיךָ בְּחֶכְמָה עֲשִׂיךָ at the end of v. 25. Read, with many MSS קִנְיִיךָ for קִנְיִיךָ, "thy creature". 26. Read תִּנְיִיךָ for the quite inappropriate תִּנְיִיךָ, "ships".

The verse-numbering at the opening of the psalm does not tally with the rhythmic balance of the verse-divisions; v. 1 and the first half-line of v. 2 belong together, and form the introductory address to Yahweh; with the second half-line of v. 2, of which the first half-line of v. 3 forms the second member, the main subject-matter of the psalm begins. This is indicated in our rendering by the change from "Thou" to "Who".

1. With his mind full of thoughts concerning the stupendous might of Yahweh, which he is about to describe, the psalmist's first utterance proclaims the greatness of his God: *my God, thou art very great*. 2. His conception of the Almighty *as clothed with majesty and honour* (cp. Ps. 96<sup>6</sup>) through the brilliance of *light* with which he envelops himself, was taken from ancient Iranian belief; according to this, the Good Spirit, i.e., Mazda, "chose the Divine Righteousness; yea, he so chose, who clotheth upon himself the firm stones of heaven as his robe,"<sup>1</sup> i.e., the stars which are full of light. But in the very next sentence the psalmist gives utterance to a different idea, adapted from Babylonian cosmology: *who spreadeth out the heavens like a canopy*, a poetical way of describing the firmament (lit. something "beaten out"), as in Isa. 40<sup>22</sup>, Job 9<sup>8</sup>. 3. Of Babylonian origin, too, is the conception of the heavenly dwelling-place, the pillars of which rest in the waters beneath;<sup>2</sup> similarly, according to Egyptian belief, four pillars support the heavens.<sup>3</sup> *Who maketh clouds his chariot* . . .; in one of the Ras Shamra texts the god is spoken of as "he that rideth upon the clouds"; for the Babylonian conception see the introductory section. 4-9. These verses contain also echoes of Babylonian beliefs occurring in the Creation Epic; <sup>4</sup> the victory of the god over his enemies,

<sup>1</sup> The Gathas; Yasna xxx. 5 (*The Zend-Avesta*, Part III, transl. by L. H. Mills, in "The Sacred Books of the East", Vol. 31 [1887]).

<sup>2</sup> Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, Vol. II, p. 108 (1920).

<sup>3</sup> Erman, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, p. 16 (1934).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte zum alten Testament*, pp. 108 ff. (1926).



*i.e.*, the Deep, is mentioned also in a Ras Shamra text. That all these ideas from extraneous sources had long been current in Israel is, of course, the fact; and it is of the deepest interest to see how they were adapted to Israelite belief. In what follows the psalmist speaks of the divine solicitude for all that lives on earth. 10-18. It will be noticed how emphasis is laid on the presence of water; in a country like Palestine this was looked upon as one of the greatest of God's gifts. Water for *beasts* and *birds*; water to make *the grass to grow for the cattle*, and *herb* for the various animals who do *service* for *man*, such as oxen, donkeys, and camels; water (*moisture*, as we must emend) to nourish the vine and the olive for man's benefit; water for the sustenance of the mighty trees, so necessary for the feathered flocks. From the creative act which gives water to man and beast and flying things the psalmist turns to speak of the moon and the sun, also indispensable for man and beast. 19-23. First to be spoken of is *the moon*; that this should be mentioned before the sun is significant as showing its greater importance. Among the Semites in the nomadic stage flocks and herds were led to fresh pasturage at night on account of the heat by day; it was natural enough, therefore, that the moon was at one time their chief deity.<sup>1</sup> The old belief in the moon and the sun as deities, though now, of course, subservient to Yahweh, is re-echoed here; the moon is thought of as having been *made* to mark off the divisions of time; the word is, however, used specifically in reference to sacred seasons, *i.e.*, the times of the great feasts (cp. Gen. 1<sup>14</sup>, Lev. 23<sup>2-8</sup>, Eccclus. 43<sup>7, 8</sup>). Of less importance was *the sun*, of which it is merely said that Yahweh had taught it when *to go down*. It is interesting to contrast this with the importance and glorification of the sun in Ikhnaton's hymn (see below). 20. *Darkness* is spoken of as a separate created thing; it does not supervene because the moon or the sun cease to shine; both light and darkness were thus conceived of as entities separately created (cp. Gen. 1<sup>3-5</sup>). With this verse and 21-23 cp. Ikhnaton's hymn, quoted below. 24-26. Having spoken of the earth and all that lives thereon, the psalmist pictures *the sea great and wide* with all the *beasts small and great* moving about in it. 27-30 form a new section; the psalmist, thinking of all that lives on earth or in the sea, says that *These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their food in due season*, and he goes on to declare that life and death are in the hands of God: *Thou sendest forth thy breath, they are created; thou withdrawest their breath, they die*. 31-35. The psalm concludes with a short hymn of praise; in view of all the glorious acts of Yahweh and his benefits conferred on everything living, the psalmist deplores the fact that there should be any who do not *rejoice in Yahweh*, as he does; they are not fit to share in the mercies so freely lavished: *May sinners be consumed from the earth, may the*

<sup>1</sup> Nielsen, *Die altarabische Mondreligion*, pp. 33 f. (1904).

wicked be no more. But his final thought reverts to God, and he ends as he began : *Bless Yahweh, O my soul.*

The parallelism of thought, sometimes verbal, between vv. 1-5, 10-26 of our psalm with Ikhnaton's hymn of praise to the Sun-god is so striking that it will be worth while quoting some part of it; the conclusion is difficult to resist that our psalmist was familiar with it. The following extract is translated from the German versions of Ranke, in Gressmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 ff., and of Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 111 ff.

"Thou appearest in beauty on the horizon of heaven,  
Thou living sun, the first to live.  
Thou risest on the eastern horizon,  
Suffusing all lands with thy beauty.  
Glorious art thou, and mighty,  
Shining on high o'er the lands.  
Thy rays encircle the countries  
To the farthest limit of all thy creation;  
Thou art Re (*i.e.*, the Sun-god) reaching out to their uttermost border,  
Subduing them for thy beloved son (*i.e.*, the Pharaoh).  
Far off art thou, yet thy beams touch the earth;  
Thou art seen of men, but thy pathway they know not.

Thou settest in the western horizon,  
And the earth becometh dark as death.  
Men rest in their chambers,  
With head enveloped, no eye sees aught;  
Should their goods be taken that lie under their heads,  
They would fail to perceive it.  
The lion comes forth from his lair,  
And the serpents bite.  
Darkness rules, and the earth is still,  
For he that made all resteth in the horizon.

When the earth becometh light, thou risest on the horizon,  
And, as the Sun, dost illumine the day;  
The darkness fleeth when thy rays thou dost spread;  
The two lands (*i.e.*, Upper and Lower Egypt) rejoice;  
They (*i.e.* the inhabitants) awake, stand up on their feet,  
When thou hast raised them up;  
They cleanse their bodies and clothe themselves,  
Their arms give praise (*i.e.*, by uplifting them), for thou hast appeared;  
The whole earth goeth forth to labour,  
The cattle are satisfied with grass;  
The trees and the herbs grow green,  
The birds from their nests fly forth,  
With their wings they offer thee praise.  
The beasts spring up on their feet,  
The birds and every flying thing  
Live, when thou art risen."

### *Religious Teaching.*

Apart from the teaching of the creative acts of Yahweh, and that he is the God of Nature, and of his solicitude for all his created beings, there is in this psalm a further element in its religious teaching which provokes thought. The psalmist utilizes and adapts the conceptions and beliefs of peoples who do not acknowledge Yahweh as their God; and yet he obviously discerns elements of truth in these old-world ideas; otherwise he, as a loyal and devout believer in the God of gods,

would not have employed them. The principle here accepted by the psalmist, unconscious as he doubtless was of its implications, is far-reaching in its application. Could there ever have been a time since the creation of man in which the Almighty did not evince an interest in the highest of all created things, man? Was there ever a time in which God, in his love for men, ceased from his self-revelation to men, according to their capacity for apprehension? We think of the grand words: "Jesus Christ, the same to-day, and yesterday, and for ever" (Hebr. 13<sup>8</sup>), and must realize that from the very beginnings of human history ultimate truth was vouchsafed in "divers portions and in divers manners" (Hebr. 11). Thus, in all the crude beliefs of other peoples, Egyptian, Babylonian, Iranian, echoed by the psalmist, there are to be discerned germs of truth, held by men struggling through light and darkness—divine light and human darkness—to attain, no matter how slow the process, to the fulness of truth. "Art not thou from everlasting, Yahweh, my God, mine Holy One!" (Hab. 1<sup>12</sup>).

One other element must be briefly mentioned. It is impossible to read this glorious psalm without feeling the triumphant joy that pulsates throughout. It reflects, as undoubtedly the psalmist intended that it should, the solemn happiness of the Creator in the beneficent work he has wrought; in his loving forethought in providing all living beings with what they need, he has brought satisfaction, gratitude, joy to all. Should not that happiness granted by a loving Creator to all his creatures give happiness to him too? It could not be otherwise. We must, therefore, discern in this psalm the thought, unexpressed but not the less present and real, of the happiness of God—a thought as beautiful as it is true.

### PSALM 105

OF the type of Ps. 78, this psalm is primarily a thanksgiving, called forth by Yahweh's wondrous acts in the past. The detailed account of the Exodus and the subsequent events during the wanderings in the wilderness (as in Ps. 78) illustrate the great importance attached to them; and with reason, since they record the constitution of Israel as a nation, and the institution of the Mosaic religion, making Yahweh the God of the nation. Four other topics receive special attention: the promises to Abraham, the story of the patriarchs, the covenant of Yahweh, and Canaan as the people's inheritance. The early part of the psalm, *vv.* 1-15, is largely identical with 1 Chron. 16<sup>8-36</sup>. A number of indications make it certain that the psalm is of late post-exilic date.

The metre, with the exception of vv. 1, 11, 15, is 3 : 3.

1. Give thanks to Yahweh,  
Call upon his name,  
Make known among the peoples his doings.
2. Sing unto ° Yahweh °, sing praises unto him,
3. Glorify yourselves in his holy name, be speaking of all his wondrous acts.  
let the heart rejoice of them that seek Yahweh.
4. Enquire of Yahweh and his strength, seek his face continually,
5. Remember his marvellous works which he hath done, his wonders, and the judgements of his mouth,
6. O ye seed of Abraham, his servant, ye sons of Jacob ° his chosen °.
7. He, Yahweh, is our God, his judgements are in all the world.
8. He remembereth his covenant for ever, —the word which he commanded to a thousand generations,—  
and his oath to Isaac ;
9. Which he made with Abraham,
10. And he confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant :
11. " ° To you ° will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance."
12. When they were but few men in number, yea, very few, and strangers therein,
13. Then went they about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people ;
14. He permitted not a man to harm them, and rebuked kings for their sakes :
15. " Touch not mine anointed ones, And do my prophets no harm."
16. When he called for a famine on the land, and broke every staff of bread,
17. Then sent he a man before them, Joseph was sold as a slave ;
18. They hurt his feet with fetters, his neck entered into the iron,
19. Until the time that his word came to pass ; the saying of Yahweh proved true ;
20. The king sent and loosed him, a ruler of peoples, and set him free ;
21. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance,
22. ° To teach ° his princes ° according to ° his will, and ° all ° his elders he instructed.
23. And Israel came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
24. And he made his people very fruitful, and made them stronger than their adversaries.
25. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.
26. He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen ;
27. ° He brought about among them his signs by their word °, and wondrous things in the land of Ham :
28. He sent darkness and made it dark, but ° they observed ° not his words ;
29. He turned their waters into blood, and slew ° all ° their fish ;
30. Their land swarmed with frogs, ° and they entered ° into the chambers of ° the king ° ;
31. He commanded, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats in all their region ;
32. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land ;
33. He smote their vines and fig-trees, and brake the trees in their border ;
34. He commanded, and the locust came, and the cankerworm, yea, without number,
35. And ate up every herb in their land, ° and consumed ° the fruit of their ground ;
36. And he smote all the firstborn in their land, the best of all their strength.
37. And he brought them forth with silver and gold, there was not one that stumbled among their tribes.
38. Egypt was glad when they went forth, for the fear of them had fallen upon them.
39. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light at night.
40. ° They asked, and there came ° quails °, and he satisfied them with bread from heaven.

41. He opened the rock, and waters  
gushed out, they ran in dry places, a river.  
42. For he remembered his holy word with Abraham, his servant.  
43. And he brought forth his people with  
joy, and his chosen ones with shouting;  
44. And he gave them the lands of the  
nations, and they took the labours of the peoples  
in possession;  
45. That they might keep his statutes, and observe his laws.  
Hallelujah.

## Text-critical Notes

2. Read יהוה for לו, "to him", both for the rhythm's sake, and on account of the following לו. 6. Read, with some MSS בְּחִירוֹ for יוֹ . . . "his chosen ones".  
11. Read לָכֵם, cp. I Chron. 16<sup>19</sup>, for לָךְ, "to thee". 22. Read, with GS, לִי־סֵר, "to bind". Read, with GS, בְּ for וְ "with". Add בְּל for the rhythm's sake. 27. Read שְׁמִירָם בְּדִבְרֵם אֲתוּחֵיו for שְׁמִירָם and דִּבְרֵי. 28. Read שְׁמִירָם for מָרִי, "they rebelled". 29. Add בְּל for the rhythm's sake. 30. Add וַיִּבְנֵה for the rhythm's sake. Read הַמִּלְכִּים for מַלְכֵיהֶם, "their kings".  
35. Read, with Duhm, וַיִּבְל to avoid the repetition of וַיֵּאָכֵל, "and ate up".  
40. Read, with GS, וַיִּבְאָה, for שָׁאַל וַיִּבְאָה, "he asked and brought".  
Read, with Gunkel, שָׁאַל for שָׁאַל.

1-6. These verses form an introductory exhortation to the psalm, calling upon the people, spoken of as the *seed of Abraham*, and the *sons of Jacob*, to *give thanks to Yahweh*; the Hebrew word connotes both thanksgiving and giving praise. Instructive is the way in which the psalmist indicates how this is to be shown forth; viz., by calling upon Yahweh's name, making known his acts among all peoples, singing to him, rejoicing in him, seeking his face, remembering his works; it is a beautiful conception of worship which the psalmist thus places on record. 7-11. The central thought here is the *covenant with Abraham*, as well as with Isaac and Israel (Jacob), see Exod. 2<sup>24</sup>, i.e., the promise to give them, in their posterity, *the land of Canaan*. The fulfilment of this is then developed in detail. 12-15. First a brief outline of the story of the patriarchs. It will not be necessary, excepting in a few cases, to give references to the earlier books; as a rule, the events which the psalmist has in mind are sufficiently familiar; he makes use of the Pentateuch in its present form, i.e., including the latest document (P) embodied. In this section the only verse demanding a comment is 15; only here and in 1 Chron. 16<sup>22</sup> are the patriarchs spoken of as *mine anointed ones*, indeed, the plur. occurs nowhere else. Again, *my prophets*, in reference to the patriarchs, is found here only; once Abraham is called a prophet (Gen. 20<sup>7</sup>). 16-23. Here we have a brief reference to the Joseph narrative, somewhat involved, it is true. *The famine on* (so the Hebrew) *the land* is ascribed to Yahweh's direct action; the curious phrase, "*staff*" of bread (cp. Lev. 26<sup>26</sup>, Ezek. 4<sup>16</sup>, 5<sup>16</sup>, 14<sup>13</sup>, Ecclus. 8<sup>2</sup>), owes its existence to the custom of pressing newly baked pieces of bread on small pointed wooden sticks for temporary storing; the "*staff*" supported the bread, if it was broken the bread might

easily come to grief from one cause or another. Another phrase which reads strangely is that in 18, *his neck* (lit. "his soul") *entered into the iron*; this sense of "neck" for *nepheš* ("soul") occurs in Ps. 69<sup>1</sup>: "the waters have come unto my neck"; in the verse before us the reference is to the iron collar round the neck of a slave; this is not mentioned in Gen. 39<sup>20</sup>. In 19, *his word* means the "purpose" of Yahweh. In the next section, 24-38, there is but little that calls for comment; the plagues of Egypt form a theme dealt with elsewhere (e.g., Ps. 78<sup>43-51</sup>). A few textual corruptions have crept in; they are briefly dealt with in the text-critical notes. In contrast to the detailed enumeration of the plagues, the wanderings in the wilderness, 39-41, are very summarily dealt with; the wondrous acts of Yahweh are the psalmist's main preoccupation, as in the preceding section. One somewhat surprising thing is that, unlike in other psalms of this type, no reference is made to the sins of the people (see 78<sup>8ff.</sup>, 17<sup>ff.</sup>, 106<sup>13ff.</sup>, 32<sup>ff.</sup>). In the concluding vv. 42-45, the psalmist reverts to the covenant, *the holy word*, with Abraham; all that has intervened has been the outcome of this; and it culminates in Israel's possession of *the lands of the nations*, which Yahweh *gave them*. Stress is laid in the final words on Israel's part of the covenant, viz., *that they might keep his statutes, and observe his laws*.

### *Religious Teaching*

One matter of deep importance has already been referred to, but a few further words on the subject are called for; we mean the elements of worship which the psalmist sets forth. There can be no doubt that his words reflect what was said and felt by the devout in the Temple-worship, as also in the later Synagogue-worship, on which that of the Church was originally based. Notable is the stress laid on joy in worship; the feeling of happiness in offering praise and thanksgiving is one the cultivation of which cannot be too strongly insisted on; and the way in which, in this psalm, this element in worship is brought out must be thankfully recognized.

Another thing to be noted is the divine guidance in history; with this we have, however, dealt in discussing the religious teaching of various other psalms, see especially Ps. 44; we shall not, therefore, say more about it here.

And, once more, the psalmist calls upon his people to remember, and to be grateful for, the divine mercies accorded in the past; another lesson greatly needed in all ages, whether in regard to nations or individuals. The preoccupations of the present are but too apt to absorb all thought and attention; so that the numberless blessings of days gone by are forgotten. A psalm like this, therefore, reminds men of a duty too often lost sight of.

## PSALM 106

THIS psalm is the third of those which contain a retrospect of early Israelite history. But while being of the general type of Pss. 78 and 105, it comes closer to the former of these in one important particular—namely, in the stress laid on the sinfulness of the people during those early days. In this respect it partakes, like Ps. 78, of the nature of a national confession uttered by one representing the nation; but unlike Ps. 78, the confession is not only in respect of past generations, it is uttered also on behalf of the present one: “We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, and we have done wickedly” (v. 6); that is a striking addition.

The psalm was written by one living in the Dispersion: “Gather us from among the nations” (v. 47); its inclusion in the Psalter affords an interesting indication of the contact between the Jews of the Dispersion with their brethren in the home-land.

The late post-exilic date of the psalm is shown by its copious use of other post-exilic psalms.

The metre is, with few exceptions, 3 : 3.

1. Hallelujah !  
O give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his lovingkindness (endureth) for ever.
2. Who can utter the mighty acts of Yahweh, or make all his praise to be heard ?
3. Blessed are they that observe justice, ° that do ° righteousness at all times.
4. ° Remember us °, Yahweh, in the favour towards thy people, ° visit us ° with thy help,
5. That we may see the prosperity of thy chosen ones, That we may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, That we may glory with thine inheritance.
6. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, ° and ° we have done wickedly.
7. Our fathers in Egypt understood not thy wondrous acts ; They remembered not the abundance of thy lovingkindnesses, they rebelled ° against the Most High ° at the sea of reeds ;
8. But he helped them for his name's sake, that he might make his power to be known.
9. He rebuked the sea of reeds that it dried up, and he led them through depths as through pasture-land ;
10. And he delivered them from the hand of the hater, and redeemed them ° from the clutch ° of the enemy.
11. And the waters covered their adversaries, not one of them was left.
12. Then believed they his words, ° whereupon ° they sang his praise.
13. ° They soon forgot ° his works, ° and ° waited not for his counsel ;
14. But ° they lusted exceedingly ° in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert ;
15. And he gave them their request, and sent ° food ° according ° to their desire.
16. And they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron, the holy one of Yahweh.
17. The earth opened, and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram ;
18. And fire was kindled in their company, the flame burned up the wicked.
19. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped a molten image, for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass ;
20. And they changed their glory, who did great things in Egypt, terrible things at the sea of reeds,
21. They forgot God their saviour,
22. Wondrous things in the land of Ham,

23. And he said ° that he would destroy them °,  
He stood in the breach before him,  
24. And they despised the pleasant land,  
25. And they murmured in their tents,  
26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them,  
27. And ° to disperse ° their seed among the nations,  
28. And they joined themselves to Baalpeor,  
29. And they provoked ° him ° to anger by their deeds,  
30. But Phinehas stood up and mediated,  
31. And it was reckoned unto him for righteousness  
32. And they angered him at the waters of Meribah,  
33. For ° they had embittered ° his spirit.  
34. They did not destroy the peoples,  
35. But mingled themselves among the nations,  
36. And they served their idols,  
37. And they sacrificed their sons  
38. And they poured out innocent blood °,  
39. They became unclean by their deeds,  
40. Then was the wrath of Yahweh kindled against his people,  
41. And he gave them into the hand of the nations,  
42. Their enemies also oppressed them,  
43. Many times did he deliver them,  
44. Nevertheless he regarded their distress  
45. And he remembered for them his covenant,  
46. And he gave them for (objects of) mercy  
47. Save us, Yahweh our God,  
That we may give thanks to thy holy name,  
48.

Blessed be Yahweh,  
the God of Israel,  
from henceforth  
and for evermore;  
And let all the people say: "Amen."  
Hallelujah.

### Text-critical Notes

3. Read, with some MSS. and the Versions, עֲשֹׂה for עָשָׂה, "he that doeth".  
4. Read, with some MSS. and the Versions, זָכְרֵנִי for זָכְרָנִי, "remember me".  
Read, with some MSS. and G, פָּקֹדֵנִי for פָּקֹדֵנִי, "visit me". 6. Add, with many MSS., וְ, "and". 7. Read עָלֵינוּ for עָלֵיָם, "at the sea", and עַל for עַל, "in". 10. Read כַּיֶּהָא, lit. "palm" of the hand (see Ps. 71<sup>4</sup>) for מִיָּד, "from the hand", the repetition of which in the same v. is unusual. 12. Add הִנֵּה for the rhythm's sake. 13. Lit. "they hastened, they forgot". Add, with some MSS. and S, וְ, "into". 14. Lit. "they lusted a lust". 15. Read, with Briggs, מָוֶן. Read עַל for עַל, "into". 23. For the construction see GK 114<sup>fo</sup>. 24. Add, with GS, וְ. 25. Add, with some MSS. and S, וְ. 27. Read, with S, לְהַפִּיץ, parallel with "scatter". 29. Add, with GS, הָיָה—. 33. Read הָמָרִי for הָמָרִי, "they were rebellious", which is used of rebellion against God, see vs. 7, 43. 38. Om., as a later gloss, בְּבָנָיו . . . דָּם, "the blood of their sons and their daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan". 43. Read בְּעֲצָרוֹתָם for בְּעֲצָרוֹתָם, "their purpose". Om. בְּעֲצָרוֹתָם, "and they were brought low in their iniquity", a marg. note which disturbs the rhythm.

but for Moses, his chosen,  
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.  
° and ° trusted not in his word.  
° and ° hearkened not unto the voice of Yahweh;

to overthrow them in the wilderness,  
and to scatter them in the lands.  
and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

and the plague brake in among them;  
and the plague was stayed,

to generations and generations for ever.

and it went ill with Moses for their sakes;  
so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.  
as Yahweh had commanded them,

and learned their works;  
and they became a snare unto them;  
and their daughters to demons,  
and the land was polluted with blood.  
and went a-whoring in their doings.

and he abhorred his inheritance.  
and they that hated them ruled over them.

and they were bowed down under their hand.  
but they rebelled ° against his purpose °.  
when he heard their cry;  
and repented according to the abundance of his lovingkindness;  
among all who had taken them captive.  
and gather us from among the nations,  
and triumph in thy praise.



As in the case of Ps. 105, the character of this psalm, being merely a repetition of the details of early Israelite history, does not call for many exegetical notes.

1-6. The introductory words of praise (1, 2) are followed (3) by an expression of the blessedness of those *that observe justice and do righteousness*. The prayer (4, 5) and confession (6) are said in the name of the people, as clearly indicated in *v.* 6; we should, therefore, read: *Remember us, visit us*, with the Versions and some MSS., not "me", as in the English Versions. The error arose, no doubt, because of the words, *in the favour towards thy people*, which seemed to differentiate between the psalmist and the people, but "towards *us* thy people" was self-understood, though this was not recognized by the Masoretes, hence "remember me", "visit me", in the present Hebrew text. A similar error occurs in the second half of *v.* 3, where *that do*, not "he that doeth", should be read. *Thy nation* (5), the Hebrew *gôy*, when used in reference to Israel or Judah, denotes them as a sinful nation (*e.g.*, Deut. 32<sup>28</sup>, Judg. 2<sup>20</sup>, Isa. 1<sup>4</sup>, 10<sup>6</sup>) because *gôy* is ordinarily used of the Gentiles; that it refers here to Israel is, therefore, very exceptional. 7-12. The historical events begin here with a brief account of the passage of the Red Sea, as usually designated; the Hebrew is *Yâm-Sûph* "Reed sea", or sea of reeds, or weeds; it is the long narrow arm of the Red Sea, the Aelanitic Gulf, or the Gulf of Akaba. A textual difficulty occurs in 7; the Hebrew, as it stands, has: "they rebelled upon, or at, a sea, in the *Yâm-Sûph*"; the repetition of "sea" (*Yâm*) can hardly be original as it is a clumsy mode of expression; the letters are very similar to 'Elyôn, "Most High", and as the phrase "they rebelled against the Most High" occurs twice in Ps. 78<sup>17, 56</sup>, it is justifiable to read this here. 13-15. Then we have an abridged account of the episode of the quails, see Num. 11<sup>4, 13, 31-33</sup>; the text of 15 offers another difficulty; the word rendered "food" is an emendation; for the word in the Hebrew text is *râzôn*, meaning "leanness" (cp. Isa. 10<sup>16</sup>); that is inappropriate, seeing that the reference is to the quails which had been sent; we have, therefore, adopted the very similar word, suggested by Briggs, *mâzôn*, meaning "food". 16-18. Cp. Num. 16<sup>1-36</sup>. 19-23. The narrative of the worship of the golden calf is contained in Exod. 32<sup>1-6, 11-14</sup>; in *v.* 20 *their glory* means "their God" as in Ps. 3<sup>3</sup>. 24-27. The reference here is to Num. 14<sup>1-3</sup>; but in 27 the psalmist has the Exile in mind. For 28-31 see Num. 25<sup>1-9, 10-13</sup>; in Num. 25<sup>2</sup>, cp. Exod. 34<sup>15</sup>, it is said that the sacrifices were offered to gods; when, in the verse before us, it is said that *they ate the sacrifices of the dead, i.e.*, offered to the dead, it is possible that the gods, being lifeless things, were thought of as dead (cp. Isa. 44<sup>9-20</sup>, Ps. 135<sup>15-17</sup>); but it is more probable that the words are to be understood in a literal sense; offerings to the departed

were widespread in antiquity, and doubtless also among the Israelites. 32, 33. See Num. 20<sup>2-13</sup>. The psalmist then (34-46) describes the disloyalty of the Israelites to their God after the settlement in Canaan, and the divine mercy accorded to them in spite of it. This section is all perfectly straightforward, and does not call for further notes. The psalm ends (47, 48) with prayer and praise.

For the religious teaching of the psalm reference may be made to the relevant section of Ps. 105, though not all that is said there applies to this psalm.

### PSALM 107

APART from *vv.* 1-3, which are introductory, and *vv.* 33-43, which is an independent piece, added later, this skilfully constructed psalm of thanksgiving (see *v.* 22) consists of four self-contained strophes, having, however, a point of attachment in the refrain which is repeated in each. Each of the four strophes tells of those who had been in dire straits, but who had been delivered by the mercy of God, and are called upon to express their gratitude to him. Thus, the first strophe (*vv.* 4-9) tells of wanderers in the wilderness, who have been brought safely to their destination; the second (*vv.* 10-16) describes the plight of captives who had been released from prison; the third (*vv.* 17-22) speaks of the sick who had recovered from their sickness; and the fourth (*vv.* 23-32) gives an account of the perils experienced by seafarers, from which they have been rescued. All these are gathered in the Temple to give thanks to God for the mercies vouchsafed to them. The occasion was doubtless one of the great festivals, probably the Feast of Tabernacles. The psalm of thanksgiving was sung after the sacrifice of thanksgiving had been offered, if we may judge from Ps. 50<sup>14</sup>, 66<sup>17-3</sup>, 116<sup>17, 18</sup>, Jon. 2<sup>9</sup>, see also *v.* 22 of our psalm, where the offering of the sacrifices of thanksgiving are mentioned before the singing.

As to the outward form of these strophes, there is not absolute uniformity; the normal form would seem to be: two 3 : 3 lines, followed by the first half of the refrain; then a single 3 : 3 line, followed by the second half of the refrain, after which another 3 : 3 line concludes the strophe; this is the form of the first and third strophes, and, but for an additional line, the form of the second; but the fourth strophe is considerably extended. Hence some commentators believe *v.* 11 in the second strophe, and a large part of the fourth strophe, to be later additions. With this we find it difficult to agree; *v.* 11 is quite appropriate, and even if it breaks the external symmetry of the strophe,

there is no reason to suppose that the ancient Hebrew poets were tied to a rigid uniformity; and as to the fourth strophe, there was ample reason why this should have been somewhat developed; the sea and the sea-faring life had been unfamiliar in the past; the perils of the sea and its mysterious changes were awe-inspiring; what more natural than that, in speaking of it, the psalmist should feel prompted to dwell somewhat fully on its dangers? It must also be recognized that the fourth strophe reaches a climax; it tells of the most signal marks of God's mercy, and of his power in stilling the elements. Some little development of treatment is, therefore, fully comprehensible.

As to the final section (*vv.* 33-43), it may be noted, first, that it contains no word of thanksgiving; if it were the concluding portion of the psalm of thanksgiving some expression of this would assuredly have found a place. Further, the absence of the refrain, present in each of the other sections, cuts it off from the body of the psalm. Its content, moreover, differs from the psalm itself; it describes, on the one hand, the punishment inflicted on men for their wickedness by the Almighty, and, on the other, his merciful treatment of the needy and the upright; this, together with the contrasts presented, is different from the whole course of the preceding psalm. And, finally, there is the difference of outward form between the two. For these reasons the impression is gained that *vv.* 33-43 are not an original part of the psalm, but were added later.

The date of the psalm is indicated in *v.* 3, where the people are spoken of as being gathered out of the lands; this points clearly to the Dispersion. The psalm was probably not written much earlier than about 300 B.C., or even later. The reference to the Jews as seafarers emphasizes this.

The text has come down to us with but few corruptions.

The metre is 3 : 3; where 2 : 2 : 2 occurs (*vv.* 3, 25, 26, 37) the change comes in effectively. The psalm is one of the so-called "orphan" psalms, as having no title.

1. ° HALLELUJAH.°

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. O give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good,  | for his mercy endureth for ever.                                      |
| 2. Let those saved by Yahweh utter thanks,   | whom he saved from the hand of distress;                              |
| 3. From the lands he gathered them, from east and from west, from north and from ° south.° |   |
| 4. ° They that wandered ° in desert and waste,   | the way to dwelt city they found not, their soul within them fainted. |
| 5. Hungry, yea, and thirsty,   | <i>out of their distresses he delivered them ;</i>                    |
| 6. <i>They cried to Yahweh in their need,</i>  | <i>to go to the city of habitation ;</i>                              |
| 7. He led them upon the right way,   | <i>for his wonder-works to the children of men !</i>                  |
| 8. <i>Let them thank Yahweh for his love,</i>  | and the hungry he filled with good.                                   |
| 9. For he satisfied the parched soul,  |   |

10. Such as dwelt in darkness, and deep gloom,  
 11. For they had rebelled against the words of God,  
 12. But he humbled their heart with hard labour,  
 13. *They cried to Yahweh in their need,*  
 14. He brought them out of darkness and deep gloom,  
 15. *Let them thank Yahweh for his love,*  
 16. For he shattered the gates of bronze,  
 17. Fools, for their way of transgression  
 18. All food their soul doth abhor,  
 19. *They cried to Yahweh in their need,*  
 20. He sent forth his word to heal them,  
 21. *Let them thank Yahweh for his love,*  
 22. Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,  
 23. They that went down to the sea in ships,  
 24. They saw the works of Yahweh,  
 25. He spake °, and stirred up °  
 the wind of the tempest,  
 and lifted up the waves thereof,  
 26. they mounted heavenwards,  
 went down to the depths,  
 their soul melted; ° °  
 27. They reeled and staggered like one drunken,  
 28. *They cried to Yahweh in their need,*  
 29. ° He stilled ° the storm to calmness,  
 30. Then were they glad, that they were hushed;  
 31. *Let them thank Yahweh for his love,*  
 32. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people,  
 33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness,  
 34. A fruitful ground to salt-land,  
 35. He turneth the wilderness into a pool,  
 36. There caused he the hungry to abide,  
 37. They sow fields,  
 they plant vineyards,  
 that bring forth fruits of increase;  
 38. He blesseth them and they yield abundantly,  
 40. He poureth contempt on princes,  
 ° 39. (And they are minished and bowed down,  
 41. But he lifteth up the poor from his affliction,  
 42. Let the righteous see it and rejoice,  
 43. Who is wise? Let him heed these things,  
 being bound in affliction and iron—  
 and contemned the counsel of the Most High,—  
 they stumbled, and there was none to help;  
*out of their distresses he delivered them;*  
 and their binding cords he snapped;  
*for his wonder-works to the children of men;*  
 and the bars of iron he hewed asunder.  
 and for their iniquities are afflicted;  
 they have drawn nigh the gates of death;  
*out of their distresses he delivered them;*  
 ° to deliver them ° from their destroyer °;  
*for his wonder-works to the children of men;*  
 and declare his works with a shout of joy.  
 trading in mighty waters,  
 yea, his wonder-works in the deep :  
 ° the waves of the sea ° were silent;  
 he brought them to their desired haven;  
*for his wonder-works to the children of men;*  
 where the elders sit let them praise him.  
 and watersprings into a thirsty land,  
 for the wickedness of the dwellers therein;  
 and parched land into water-springs;  
 and they founded a city to dwell in;  
 through oppression, trouble, and sorrow;) °  
 and maketh him families like a flock.  
 and all iniquity close its mouth.  
 ° let him consider the lovingkindnesses of Yahweh.

## Text-critical Notes

1. This has been erroneously placed at the conclusion of the preceding psalm; it is not a title, but the opening of the psalm itself.

3. Read מִיָּם מִיָּמִין for מִיָּם "from the sea". 4. Read תָּעַר for תָּעַר as in ש. 10, 23. 20. Read וַיִּמְלֹךְ for וַיִּמְלֹךְ "he delivered"; and מִשְׁחִיתוֹתָם for מִשְׁחִיתוֹתָם "from their destructions". Some commentators read חַיֵּיהֶם תִּיָּחַת "their life from the pit", see Hag 1<sup>14</sup> (cp. Ps. 103<sup>4</sup>). 25. Read, with Hans Schmidt, וַיַּעֲמֵד for וַיַּעֲמֵד "he caused to stand". 26. Delete בְּרָעָה "with trouble". 29. Read גְּלִי הֵיִם for גְּלִי הֵיִם (their waves). 39. This v. is possibly an insertion by a later copyist. 43. Read יִתְּבוֹנֵן for יִתְּבוֹנֵן "let them give heed".

1-3. A comprehensive reference to all those spoken of in the body of the psalm, who are called upon to give thanks to God for the signal marks of His love bestowed on them. The words *from the lands he gathered them* indicate that the Dispersion of Jews had already taken place. By the Dispersion is meant not the forcible settling of Israelites and Judahites in other lands, which took place in 722 B.C. and 597 B.C., respectively, as well as in 351 B.C., but the voluntary settlements formed for the purpose of trading and the like, which took place, mainly, during the Greek period (*circa* 300 B.C. onwards); it is graphically described in the *Sibylline Oracles* 271: "Every sea and every land is full of thee" (belonging to the second century B.C.). The dispersed Jews experienced a sense of national unity in regarding Jerusalem as the nation's centre; thither they went on one or more of the great annual feasts, of which that of Tabernacles, in the autumn, was the most important; it is probable that this psalm was sung on this occasion, though in the later Synagogue service it was one of the proper psalms for the Passover feast.

4-9. The first of whom the psalmist speaks are travellers from the east or the south, who had lost their way in the wilderness, *the way . . . they found not*; their extremely precarious position is tersely, but graphically, described: *Hungry, yea, and thirsty, their soul within them fainted*. Their cry to God is heard, who leads them to the *right way*, not "straight", as the R.V. renders; it might be ever so winding provided it was the right way. *Soul (nephesh)* is used in a very wide sense in Hebrew; as a man's personality, as the seat of the emotions and physical appetites, as here; but also in other senses. We have rendered the Hebrew *hesed* "love"; it is usually translated "mercy", or "lovingkindness", but the word connotes more than this.

10-16. In speaking next of captives who had *sat in darkness*, and had been *bound in affliction and iron*, the psalmist attributes their sufferings to their having *rebelled against the words of God*, that is, his commandments (cp. Exod. 34<sup>28</sup>); the reference here is evidently to imprisonment for theft, or other cause, of which some of the Jews had been guilty in the country of their adoption. It is implied that they are brought to repentance, and forgiven; as a result God brings about their deliverance. One sees here the many-sidedness of *hesed*.

17-22. In this section those who had been stricken with sickness are spoken of; as always, in ancient Hebrew belief, sickness is regarded

as a mark of divine disfavour for sin; the sick are spoken of as *fools for their way of transgression*. Their appeal to God is not in vain: *He sent forth his word to heal them*; for this expression see Ps. 147<sup>15</sup> Isa. 55<sup>11</sup>. In recognition of this they are called upon to *offer sacrifices of thanksgiving*; the technical term for this type of sacrifice, *today*, is the same as that for the thanksgiving itself.

23-32. Finally, the psalmist speaks of the seafarers; that these are more fully dealt with is natural enough, for trading on the seas was a comparatively new calling for the Jews. The perils of the sea are graphically described; the sailors on board the storm-tossed ship *reel and stagger*, their seamanship is of no avail, *all their skill is confounded*. But at the divine will the storm subsides. *Then they were glad that they (i.e., the waves of the sea) were hushed*. How the last verse of the section (32) is to be understood is uncertain. One expects the reference to be to the temple; but *the assembly (qahal)* is used both of the congregation at worship, and in a quite general sense. As to *the seat of the elders*, there is no evidence that they occupied any special place at the temple-worship. The verse may, therefore, mean that the rescued sailors were to express their gratitude to God both among any gathering of the people in general, as well as in the more august assembly of the elders, wherever this may have been held.

33-43. On this section see the introduction to the psalm.

### *Religious Teaching*

Probably in no other psalm is the belief in the divine intervention in the ordinary affairs of men expressed in more detail than here. The intense conviction that, when in need or stress, men seek help from God, that help is forthcoming, is also a striking characteristic of the psalm. This faith in the divine response to prayer which this and other psalms teach has impressed itself in a touching way on the prayers of the Jewish Liturgy; here again and again a prayer is concluded with a blessing on the Almighty for granting the petition prayed for; thus, for example, at the end of a prayer for God's help for those in affliction come the words: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who answerest in time of trouble".

The psalm is also remarkable for the picture it gives of congregational worship.

### PSALM 108

THIS psalm consists of two extracts: vv. 1-5 are taken from Ps. 57<sup>7-11</sup>, and vv. 6-13 from Ps. 60<sup>5-12</sup>. There are five slight variations, four of which are negligible; one is, however, of interest: in v. 3 the divine

name Yahweh is used in place of *Adonai* in 57<sup>9</sup>, indicating the fact that our psalm belonged to a group in which the name of Yahweh was used in speaking of the Deity; nevertheless, everywhere else in the psalm, when God is mentioned, *Elohim* is used, following herein the two other psalms, both of which belong to the Elohist group. The point is of interest as showing that our psalm utilized Pss. 57 and 60, not *vice versa*.

For the commentary and other details see under Pss. 57 and 60. The metre of *vv.* 1-5 is 3 : 2; that of *vv.* 6-13 is mainly 3 : 3.

*A Song. A Psalm. David's.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 (2). My heart is fixed, O God,<br>I will sing and make melody ° to<br>thee °                         | ° my heart is fixed °,<br>° thou art ° my glory.                |
| 2 (3). Awake, harp and lyre,   | I will awake the dawn.  |
| 3 (4). I will give thanks to thee among<br>the peoples, Yahweh,  | I will make melody to thee among the<br>nations.                |
| 4 (5). For great is thy love, ° unto ° the<br>heavens,   | and unto the skies thy truth,                                   |
| 5 (6). Be thou exalted, O God, above<br>the heavens,   | and above all the earth thy glory.                              |
| 6 (7). In order that my beloved may be<br>delivered,   | save with thy right hand, and answer<br>me.                     |
| 7 (8). God hath spoken in his holiness,<br>And mete out the valley of Sukkoth :                        | I will exult, I will divide Shechem,                            |
| 8 (9). Gilead is mine,<br>Manasseh is mine<br>Ephraim is the defence of my head,<br>Judah is my staff, |   |
| 9 (10). Moab is my washpot,<br>Over Philistia will I shout.  | over Edom will I cast my shoe,<br>who will bring me unto Edom ? |
| 10 (11). Who will lead me to the fenced<br>city ?  | thou goest not forth, O God, with our<br>hosts.                 |
| 11 (12). Hast thou not, O God, cast us<br>off ?  | for vain is the help of man,                                    |
| 12 (13). Give us help against the adversary,   | yea, he will tread down our adversaries.                        |
| 13 (14). With God we shall do valiantly,   |   |

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Add לְכֹן לְפִי as in 57<sup>7</sup>. Add, with G, לֵךְ. Read, with Duhm, אֶתְּךָ, for אֶתְּךָ, "even". 4. Read, as in 57<sup>10</sup>, עָלַי. 10. Read, with G, יִנְחֵנִי for נִחֵנִי, "hath led me".

PSALM 109

THIS psalm belongs to magical texts rather than to religious literature. There are imprecatory elements in some other psalms, but in none is there the exaggerated vindictiveness characteristic of this one. The contention of some commentators that the imprecations are the quotations of his enemies, and not those of the psalmist himself, is due to a misunderstanding of the nature of the psalm. The only extenuation that can be pleaded for the terrible sentiments expressed by the psalmist

against his adversaries, and against one in particular, is the fact that the enemies of the righteous—and righteous the psalmist feels himself to be (*vv.* 1, 4, 5, 21, 26, 30)—were regarded also as the enemies of God. The personal note, however, greatly predominates, and that its vindictive spirit made it unfitting for public worship was early recognized by the Jewish Church; the most ancient Jewish liturgical records never mention it as used in worship; it is certain that from before the beginning of the Christian era it never figured in the Jewish Liturgy.

In the early mediæval *Sepher Shimmush Tehillim*, "The Book of the use of the Psalms", the recitation of this psalm is recommended as a sovereign remedy against the machinations of an enemy.

The date is late post-exilic.

The metre is 3 : 3, with the exception of *vv.* 28, 30.

*For the Precentor. David's. A Psalm.*

1. O God of my praise, be not silent,  
They speak against me with a lying tongue,  
And they fight against me without cause;
5. And ° they return ° evil for good,
6. Set thou over him a wicked man,
7. When he is judged let him come forth guilty,
8. Let his days be ° few °,
9. Let his children be fatherless,
10. Let his sons be vagabonds, and beg,
11. Let the extortioner ensnare all that he hath,
12. Let him not have one that extendeth him kindness,
13. Let his posterity be cut off,
14. Let the iniquity of ° his father ° be remembered,
15. Let them be before Yahweh continually,
16. Because he remembered not to show mercy,  
And he persecuted the afflicted and poor,
17. He loved cursing—let it overtake him,
18. Yea, he put on cursing like his garment,  
Let it come like water to his inner part,
19. Let it be to him like raiment where-with he clotheth himself,
20. This is the recompense of mine accusers
21. But thou, Yahweh, ° look upon me °,  
° According to the goodness ° of thy love deliver me,
22. For afflicted and needy am I,
23. Like a shadow when it lengthens I go hence,
24. My knees totter through fasting,
25. ° I am become a reproach to them,
26. Help me, Yahweh, my God,
2. for the mouth of ° wickedness ° ° is opened ° against me,
3. and words of hatred encompass me,
4. ° in place of ° my love they accuse me,  
and hatred ° in place of ° my love.  
and let an accuser stand at his right-hand;
- and ° his sentence ° let it be for sin.  
and his wealth let another take ;  
and ° let ° his wife ° be ° a widow.  
° and let them be driven forth from their company °.
- and let strangers plunder his gains.
- nor one that hath pity on his orphans ;  
in ° one ° generation let ° his name ° be blotted out.  
and the sin of his mother let it not be blotted out ;  
that he may cut off ° his memory ° from the earth.
- ° . . . . . °
- and the broken of heart ° to death °.  
he desired not blessing—let it be far ° ;  
and like oil into his bones ;  
and like a girdle wherewith he always girdeth himself.  
and of them that speak evil against my soul.  
deal with me for thy name's sake,
- and my heart is pierced within me ;  
° I am swept away ° like a locust, ° and am no more °.
- and my flesh is lean, without fatness.  
they look at me, they shake their head.  
save me in thy ° great ° mercy,



27. That they may know that this is thy hand,  
 28. Let them curse, but bless thou,  
 29. Let mine accusers be clothed with dishonour,  
 30. I will greatly give thanks to Yahweh with my mouth,  
 31. For he standeth at the right-hand of the needy,
- thou, Yahweh, hast done it.  
 ° and let them that rise up against me be ashamed °, but let thy servant rejoice;  
 and let them clothe themselves with their shame like a mantle.  
 and in the midst of many will I praise him.  
 to save him ° from them that persecute ° his soul.

## Text-critical Notes

2. Read רָשָׁע for רָשָׁע "the wicked (man)"; cp. בִּזְיוֹן, "hatred," in v. 3. Om. וּפִי מְרִמָּה, "and the mouth of deceit," which overloads the text. Read with G, פָּתְחוּ for פָּתְחוּ, "they opened". 4. Lit. "instead of". Om. וְהִפְלֵיתִי, "and I, my prayer," which overloads the text. 5. Read, with S, וַיִּשְׁבּוּ for וַיִּשְׁבּוּ, "and they laid". Delete עָלַי, "upon me". Lit. "instead of". 7. Read, with Briggs, as in Isa. 28<sup>7</sup>, for הַפִּלְהֵרִי, "his prayer". 8. This plur. form is late Hebrew, cp. Eccles. 1<sup>5</sup>, *Pirge Aboth* 1<sup>15</sup>. 9. Add הָיָה for metre's sake. 10. Read, with G, וַיִּרְשׁוּ מִחֲבֵרָתָם, cp. Job 30<sup>5</sup>, 34<sup>8</sup>—i.e., from their associates, for וַיִּרְשׁוּ מִחֲבֵרָתָם, "and let them seek out their desolate places". 13. Read, with G, אַחֲרָה for אַחֲרָה, "after". Read, with many MSS and G, שְׁמָם for שְׁמָם, "their name". 14. Read אֲבֹתָיו for אֲבֹתָיו, "his fathers". Om., with S, אֶל־יְהוָה, "unto Yahweh". 15. Read, with G, זְכָרוֹ for זְכָרוֹ, "their memory". 16. A half-line seems to have fallen out here. Read, with S, לְמִוְתָהּ for לְמִוְתָהּ, "to slay". 17. Om. מִמֶּנִּי, "from him", which overloads the text. 18. A half-line seems to have fallen out here. 20. Om. מֵאֵת יְהוָה, "from Yahweh", which overloads the text. 21. Read, with Gunkel, אֱלֹהֵי, "my Lord". Read עָטִיב for עָטִיב, "for good is . . ." A half-line seems to have fallen out here. 23. Read, with Gunkel, נִסְעַרְתִּי for נִסְעַרְתִּי, "I am poured out", which, in reference to a locust, is inappropriate. Add וְאֵינִי for the metre's sake. 25. Om. the pronoun, וְאֵינִי, which overloads the text. 26. Add, with G, בָּרַב for the metre's sake. 28. Read וַיִּשְׁבּוּ for וַיִּשְׁבּוּ, "they rise up and are ashamed". 31. Read, with G, מִדֹּרְפֵי, "from them that judge".

1-5. The psalmist begins by bringing his complaint before God; he is the victim of slander, *they speak against me with a lying tongue*; his enemies have shown him hatred in return for his love. 6-15. Against one enemy in particular the psalmist entertains the bitterest feelings. He pictures a court scene, where the judge is a *wicked man*; at the *right-hand* of the enemy stands his accuser, the Hebrew word for which is *sātān*, often used of an adversary in the ordinary sense (e.g., 1 Kgs. 5<sup>4</sup> (18), 11<sup>14</sup>, 23, 25, and elsewhere); in reference to a superhuman being the term occurs in 1 Chron. 21<sup>1</sup>; Job 1<sup>6</sup> ff. 2<sup>1</sup> ff.; Zech. 3<sup>1</sup>, 2; it is never used as a proper name in the Old Testament. The enemy is to be judged as *guilty*, and the sentence is to be in accordance with his *sin*. The supreme desire, a long life, is not to be his lot: *let his days be few*; and *his office let another take*; the term used for this, *pequdāh*, refers to a civil post, not to the priestly office, as some commentators erroneously suppose; its use in a number of passages

makes this clear. The words do not refer to the loss of his office, from which he is to be displaced in favour of someone else, but to its vacancy owing to his death. Similarly the words: *Let his children be fatherless, and let his wife be a widow* are in reference to his death, not to ill-will on the part of the psalmist towards them. The suffering of his children, through the loss of what might have been their inheritance, is dealt with in 10, 11; on 10 see critical note; and here again it is not against the children that there is any feeling; what was in the psalmist's mind was what is said about "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me" (Deut. 5<sup>9</sup>); but in his case the psalmist says: *In one generation let his name be blotted out*; i.e., he is to have no posterity. And once more, in referring to the sins of the enemy's father and mother, the reason why these sins should be *before Yahweh continually*, is that their penalty should rest on him, *that he may cut off his memory from the earth*. The words in 8, *And his office let another take*, are quoted in Acts 1<sup>20</sup> in reference to Judas; hence this psalm became known as *Psalmus Ischarioticus* in the Christian Church. 16-20. The retribution upon the enemy is to be that the very sin of which he has been guilty is to react upon him: *He loved cursing, let it overtake him*. . . . In 20 the psalmist reverts to his enemies in general, as in 2-5; a similar change from many enemies to one, and *vice versa*, occurs elsewhere, e.g., Ps. 35<sup>4</sup> ff. and 8, 55<sup>13, 14</sup>. 21-31. The psalmist now leaves the subject of his enemy, and speaks of himself, pouring out his complaint to God. He is suffering from sickness, believed to be in consequence of sin: *I am become a reproach unto them, they look at me, they shake their head*; this is not in reference to his enemies, but to the belief held generally among his fellows. The psalmist himself recognizes this, and prays for divine help. The enemies are once more referred to in 28, 29. The psalm closes with a note of thankfulness to God for answering the prayer of his servant.

### *Religious Teaching*

The subject-matter of this psalm accounts for the fact that it offers but little of an edifying character. That the psalmist should believe that by appealing to God the curses which he calls down upon the head of his enemy will assume a kind of magical force, reveals an element of religious superstition common enough in those days, but which is far removed from the true religious spirit so predominant in the psalms generally. There is something to be said for the contention of some commentators that in its original form the psalm was an exorcism directed against a sorcerer, and that this accounts for the expressions of hatred; and that it was subsequently worked over and adapted to different conditions.

That this psalmist is not, however, lacking in the religious sense comes out clearly enough in the latter part of the psalm, where he expresses his better feelings. There is one point in these final verses which should, in fairness to the psalmist, be noted: he is suffering grievously in body, and there is some excuse for one in such a case if peevishness and irritability should temporarily master him, and induce a state of mind alien to his normal self. True, it would have been better had he not written his psalm under such conditions; nevertheless, let it be recognized that this frank laying bare of the weaker side of human nature may be instructive; even the faults of others have their uses—*injuriarum remedium est oblivio*.

### PSALM 110

FEW of the psalms have been subjected to more diverse interpretation than this one; yet, in spite of the difficulty of some passages, owing to textual corruption, the general meaning seems clear enough. The words of the psalm are addressed to the king. The psalmist, in the prophetic mode, utters a divine oracle, in which the king is assured of victory over his enemies. Thereupon the psalmist, on his own behalf, addresses the king. He recognizes the divine kingship, and exhorts the king to act in accordance with the divine oracle. He declares that the king has from his birth been sanctified to the kingship; and, in thoroughly Oriental style, prophesies for him lasting youth. Then he utters the well-recognized truth regarding the priestly office of the king, and recalls, what is likely to have been the traditional belief, that this office of priest-king was derived from Melkizedek. The psalmist closes with the assurance that Yahweh will fight the battles of his anointed.

The psalm thus belongs to the time of the monarchy; a comparatively early date being further suggested by the style of its composition, which is that of the pre-exilic literary period.

Which king it was to whom the psalm was addressed is quite uncertain. The contention held by some that the psalm belongs to the Maccabæan age because the letters composing the name of Simon, the Maccabæan leader, are the initial ones of the first four lines, can only be described as fantastic; for the fact is that these letters are not the initial ones of the lines in question, and can be made so only by arbitrary manipulation. Moreover, Simon was not a king; the first of the Hasmonæan rulers to assume the royal title was John Hyrcanus (134/3-104/3 B.C.).

On the Messianic interpretation of this psalm, and its use in the New Testament, see Vol. I, pp. 97 f.

As will be seen in the critical notes, the text of the psalm is corrupt in parts; textual emendation is in some cases difficult and uncertain, and there is considerable difference of opinion among scholars on many points.

The metre is mostly 3 : 2.

*David's. A Psalm.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Oracle of Yahweh to my lord :<br/>         ° Until ° I make thine enemies<br/>         2. Thy mighty sceptre ° stretch forth °,<br/>         Rule thou in the midst of thy foes,<br/>         ° In the day of thy birth thou wast<br/>         honoured,<br/>         From the dawn cometh forth<br/>         4. Yahweh hath sworn,<br/>         Thou art a priest for ever,<br/>         5. ° Yahweh ° doth shatter in the day of<br/>         his wrath ;<br/>         ° With corpses he filleth the valleys °,<br/>         ° He watereth the brooks with their<br/>         blood °;</p> | <p>' Sit at my right-hand<br/>         a stool for thy feet.'<br/>         O God, from Zion ;<br/>         3 ° thine are the princes °.<br/>         sanctified from the womb ;<br/>         the dew of thy youth °.<br/>         he will not repent,<br/>         ° of the order ° of Melkizedek.<br/>         6. kings doth he judge ;<br/>         ° maketh red the hills °;<br/>         Therefore he lifteth up ° thy head °.</p> |
|--|--|

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Read, for the metre's sake, עַד אֲשֶׁר for עַד. 2. Read שֶׁלַח for שָׁלַח, "he will stretch forth". 3. Read עַמֶּיךָ נְדִיבִים (cp. Ps. 107<sup>40</sup>) for עַמֶּיךָ נְדָבָה, "thy people are freewill offerings". For the rest of this *v.* we have adopted Gunkel's emendation:

קְדוֹשׁ מְרַחֵם	בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה לֵךְ נְהַדְרֶתָּ
שֶׁל יִלְדֶּיךָ	מִשְׁחַר יָגֵל

The present Hebrew text is largely corrupt. 4. Read with some MSS, עֲלֵי־דִבְרֶתָּ, "my lord"; and om. 5. Read, with many MSS., יְהוָה, "Yahweh", for אֲדֹנָי, "my lord"; and om. עֲלֵי־יְמִינֶךָ, "on thy right hand", which overloads the half-line; it ends with אַפּוֹ "his wrath". 6. The verse begins with מְלָכִים, "kings". Read בְּנֵי־אֻמִּים מְלָא נַאֲוִיּוֹת for בְּנֵי־אֻמִּים מְלָא נַאֲוִיּוֹת, "among the nations he hath filled corpses". Read מְחַץ רֹאשׁ for מְחַץ רֹאשִׁים, "he shattereth a head". Om. עַל־אַרְץ רְבָה, "over a broad land", which overloads the half-line. 7. Read מִנַּחַל בְּדִרְהָ יִשְׁתָּה for מִנַּחַל בְּדִרְהָ יִשְׁתָּה, "from the brook in the way he drinketh". Read רֹאשׁ for רֹאשֶׁהָ, "a head".

1-6. The psalm opens with an *Oracle* which the psalmist has received from God in reference to his lord, the king. How far the contents of the "oracle" extend is a point on which opinions differ; but to us it seems most probable that it is restricted to *v.* 1, and that in *vs.* 2-5 the exhortation to the king to use the powers conferred on him is uttered. Apart from 36<sup>2</sup> this is the only instance of the term "oracle" being used in the *Psalms*; it is the technical expression of a divine communication to a prophet, and connotes the idea of whispering in the ear rather than "utterance". In the communication itself two thoughts are prominent. The first is the treatment which God accords to the king. He is placed at God's *right-hand*, the place of honour, cp.

Ps. 45<sup>9</sup>, 80<sup>17</sup>. The picture is a poetical way of expressing the truth that he is under divine protection, as well as being honoured. But, further, he is to *sit*, an attitude which throughout the East, ancient and modern, implies inactivity. The king is to do nothing himself; he is to be, as it were, a spectator of the work of God. For it is the divine power that makes the king's enemies a *stool* for his *feet*, a gesture of triumph with which we may compare Josh. 10<sup>24</sup>, where Israel's victorious chiefs "put their feet upon the necks" of the defeated kings. So far the Oracle; then the psalmist speaks in his own name; in *vv.* 2-6 he sets forth the conception of those times that the king is God's representative among his people, and therefore, in a certain sense, to be identified with God. He begins by bidding the king arise and exercise the authority bestowed upon him as God's representative, and to *stretch forth his sceptre*; this is to indicate that he is lord of the enemies lying prostrate under his feet. The king is even addressed directly as *God*, for though the Hebrew text has "Yahweh", the context shows that the king is meant. So in Ps. 45<sup>6</sup> the king is directly addressed as God (on the divine kingship, see Vol. I, pp. 49 f.). It is probable that "Yahweh" was put in place of "God" in later days, when the belief in the divine kingship was no longer held.

The sceptre is a token of universal dominion; the king is to *rule in the midst of his foes*, and the world's *princes* are to be his slaves. For he has been destined for sovereignty from the first, set apart, made "holy", *sanctified*; from birth the divine kingship has been recognized as inherent in him. We may recall how Jeremiah was designated *from birth* to the prophetic office (Jer. 1<sup>5</sup>, 49<sup>1</sup>). On the king had fallen, according to an old-world conception, the heavenly *dew* which comes at *dawn* and confers eternal youth upon whomsoever it falls (cp. Isa. 26<sup>19</sup>, and see Gunkel, *Psalmen*, p. 482, Frazer, *The Golden Bough: Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, 1<sup>246</sup> u. [1927]). Lest there should be uncertainty of any kind, *Yahweh hath sworn* an oath to the king. To us this antique idea is distasteful; but it occurs, too, in the prophetic books, Am. 4<sup>2</sup>, 6<sup>8</sup>, Isa. 14<sup>24</sup>, Jer. 22<sup>5</sup>, and elsewhere, cp. also Ps. 89<sup>35</sup>. It may be explained as being a prophetic mode of expressing the binding character of divine communications, for it is inconceivable that God should *repent*, i.e., go back upon what he has ordained. The promise confirmed by the oath, is that the king shall be a priest *for ever of the order of Melkizedek*, a phrase whose meaning has already been discussed in Vol. I, p. 97. To fulfil the oath Yahweh is prepared to put forth all his strength upon the king's enemies, and the whole passage portrays the ancient conception of Yahweh as one mighty in battle (cp., e.g., Ps. 24<sup>8</sup>), raging irresistibly in the day of his wrath (cp. Isa. 13<sup>9, 13</sup>), dominating *kings, filling the valleys with corpses, and making red the hills, i.e., with blood*. Here the psalmist uses a verb which plays on the

similar Hebrew word for "shatter" or "smite", in the previous verse (cp. Isa. 34<sup>3, 6, 7</sup>); and the *hills* are lit. "heads", as in Ezek. 6<sup>13</sup> and elsewhere. They are the protruding tops of the giant pillars on which, according to another old-world conception, the earth rests. Down in the valleys, too, the *brooks* run *with blood*. All this lurid description has a single purpose, the exaltation of the king, whose *head* is to be *lifted up*. For the achievement of this aim God will shrink from nothing, and the express statement of his purpose gives a fitting conclusion to the passage; it ends where it began, with the anointed king sitting in lofty triumph: *He lifteth up thy head*.

### *Religious Teaching*

In spite of the old-world ideas occurring in this psalm, it would be a mistake not to recognize in it some underlying beliefs of a distinctly religious character. The belief in ancient Israel that the kingship was a divine institution contains a living truth. However quaint the human origin of the thought, and however much in practice the ideal was perverted—the history of the kings of Israel and Judah furnishes a melancholy illustration of this—there is something about this belief which must demand respect wherever the religious instinct is allowed play. In the head of the State authority is centred; that was the case in the monarchical period of ancient Israel, and in the post-exilic period when authority was centred in the High-priesthood; similarly in still later times St. Paul teaches that "there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13<sup>1</sup>). The authority of rulership, that is to say, when rightly exercised, is of divine ordering.

Again, however crudely expressed, there is the germ of truth contained in our psalm in the belief that there is a divine over-ruling in history. This is one of the outstanding elements in the prophetic doctrine of God. The psalmist puts into the mouth of God the words: "Until I make thine enemies a stool for thy feet", implying that battle is won by divine intervention; that is a crude way of expressing the belief that history, with the making of which battles have had so much to do, is directed by God. Allowing for the undeveloped mental outlook of the writer, we may discern here too an element of truth. While we are, of course, convinced that the issues of battles are not directed by the divine will, we are justified in believing in *the over-ruling guidance of divine providence in history*. In recognizing this, however crudely, the psalmist expresses a religious truth.

And, once more, one cannot fail to observe the absolute trust in God which the psalmist exhibits. The divine action described betrays, it is true, a very undeveloped conception of God; but in so far as there is a living trust in him, we must again recognize an element of true religion in the psalm.

We cannot read this psalm without thinking of our Lord's words in reference to it, recorded in the three synoptic Gospels. He evidently applied it to himself, recognizing that the writer adumbrated some eternal truths. Christ is a King: "My kingdom is not of this world"; he identified himself with God: "I and the Father are One"; he was sanctified from the womb: "His name shall be called Jesus"; he was a priest: "I lay down my life for the sheep", as well as the victim offered.

## PSALM III

THIS is an acrostic psalm in which each line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order. It is doubtless due to this that the psalm is somewhat lacking in logical sequence. A matter of interest concerning Hebrew metrical structure arises in connexion with the form of this psalm. As is well known, in Hebrew poetry a line consists normally of two halves divided by a hiatus, each half-line having its regular beats; but this psalm is an illustration, of which there are quite a number, showing that this rule was not necessarily rigidly adhered to. In this case it is the exigencies of the acrostic which make what would ordinarily be a half-line into a self-contained entity; it is not always so in the psalm, in *vv.* 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 the two halves belong together, but in the other verses the half-line is self-contained. In order to indicate the alphabetical order of the half-lines, they are printed separately in the following rendering.

The psalm belongs to the late post-exilic period, though thoughts belonging to pre-exilic times find expression. Its text has come down to us in almost perfect condition.

The half-lines have mostly three beats, but in *vv.* 6 and 10 there are four beats, while in *v.* 7 the metre is 2 : 2 : 3.

*Hallelujah.*

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1. א | I will give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,           |
| ב    | In the assembly of the upright, yea, in the congregation. |
| 2. ג | Great are the works of Yahweh,                            |
| ד    | Sought out of all who delight in them.                    |
| 3. ה | Glorious and majestic is his action,                      |
| ו    | And his righteousness standeth-fast for ever.             |
| 4. ז | He ordained a memorial of his wondrous-works;             |
| ח    | Gracious and merciful is Yahweh.                          |
| 5. ט | He gave food to them that fear him,                       |
| י    | He remembereth his covenant for ever.                     |
| 6. כ | The power of his works he made known to his people,       |
| ל    | In giving to them the heritage of the nations;            |
| 7. מ | The works of his hands are truth and justice,             |
| נ    | Trustworthy are all his precepts;                         |
| 8. ס | Standing-firm for ever and ever,                          |
| ע    | Wrought in truth and °uprightness °.                      |

9. פ He sent release to his people,  
 צ He commanded his covenant for ever.  
 ק Holy and awe-ful is his name.  
 10. ר The zenith of wisdom is the fear of Yahweh.  
 ש (It is) Insight, profitable to all ° who cultivate it °;  
 ת The praise of it endureth for ever.

### Text-critical Notes

For the title see under Ps. 105. 8. Read, with G, וַיִּשָּׁר for וַיִּשְׁר, "and an upright one". 10. Read, with G, עֲשֵׂיהָ, in reference to wisdom, for עֲשֵׂיהֶם, "that cultivate them".

1. The opening words suggest that this psalm was sung as a solo in the presence of the Temple *congregation*, described as the *assembly of the upright*. To *give thanks* is equivalent to "praise".

2-6. In these verses the psalmist refers to some of the *great works of Yahweh* in the past; though somewhat cryptic, the references were clear enough to his hearers, for, as those *who delight in them*, these *great and majestic works of Yahweh* were constantly recalled and thought about, *sought out*, by them. These works are as follows: the *memorial* which God *ordained* was the institution of the Passover: "And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever" (Exod. 12<sup>24</sup>); the words *Gracious and merciful is Yahweh* are in reference to the release from the Egyptian bondage (Exod. 12<sup>29-36</sup>, 42). The psalmist then refers to the giving of the manna (Exod. 16<sup>11-14</sup>); the word used for *food* means lit. "prey" (*tereph*), chosen, no doubt, because its opening letter was required for the acrostic; it is, however, used for ordinary food in Job 24<sup>5</sup> and Prov. 31<sup>15</sup>, also in post-Biblical Jewish literature. *He remembereth his covenant for ever* is evidently in reference to the Sabbath, spoken of immediately after the manna episode (Exod. 16<sup>28-30</sup>). And, finally, the conquest of Canaan is referred to: *In giving to them the heritage of the nations* (cp. Num. 34).

7-10. The final verses are of a somewhat miscellaneous character; the release from the Babylonian Exile is referred to in the words *He sent release to his people*; and a favourite saying from the Wisdom literature is quoted in 10: *The zenith of Wisdom is the fear of Yahweh* (cp. Prov. 1<sup>7</sup>, 9<sup>10</sup>, Eccles. 1<sup>14</sup>); we have rendered the Hebrew *r'esith* "zenith", in place of the more familiar "the beginning", since *the fear of Yahweh* is the consummation, the highest form, of wisdom; it gives understanding, *insight*, and is *profitable to all who cultivate it*.

### Religious Teaching

This psalm offers an excellent illustration of what is a beautiful characteristic of Judaism—viz., gratitude for past mercies. This religious element, while not wanting in Christian liturgies, is not so prominently expressed as in the Old Testament, as well as in the Jewish liturgies both ancient and modern.



## PSALM 112

LIKE the preceding psalm, this is an acrostic psalm of the same character ; its opening words echo the conclusion of the former, so that probably enough both are from the same author ; some identities of expression point in the same direction ; moreover, the wisdom element of the preceding psalm is developed in this one. The subject-matter throughout is the blessedness and reward of him who fears Yahweh ; only in the concluding verse is the contrast of the lot of the wicked alluded to.

The text is again admirably preserved. The metre, as in the preceding psalm, is almost uniformly three beats to the half-line, four beats occur in *vv.* 2, 4, 6, 7.

*Hallelujah.*

1. א	Blessed-the-man that feareth Yahweh,
ב	That greatly delighteth in his commandments ;
2. ג	Mighty in the land shall be his seed,
ד	The generation of the righteous shall be blessed.
3. ה	Wealth and riches are in his house,
ו	And his righteousness standeth-fast for ever.
4. ז	To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness,
ח	Gracious and merciful ° is the righteous °.
5. ט	Happy-the-man who is gracious and lendeth,
י	And maintaineth ° his ways ° with justice ;—
6. כ	For he shall never be moved,
ל	An enduring memorial shall the righteous have.
7. מ	He will fear no evil report,
נ	His heart is fixed, ° trusting ° in Yahweh,
8. ס	His heart is firm, he will not fear,
ע	While he gloateth over his enemies ;
9. פ	He disperseth, he giveth to the poor ;
צ	His righteousness standeth-fast for ever,
ק	His horn shall be exalted with honour.
10. ר	The wicked shall see it, and be vexed,
ש	He shall gnash with his teeth, and faint,
ת	The desire of the wicked shall perish.

*Text-critical Notes*

- For the title see under Ps. 105. 4. Read צדיק for צדיק, "and righteous".  
 5. Read דברי for דברי, "his words", cp. *Ecclus.* 49°. 7. Read, with G. בטיח for בטח, "trusted".

1. A characteristic thought from the Wisdom literature introduces the main theme of the psalm : *Blessed-the-man* (a compound word in the Hebrew with only one beat) *that feareth Yahweh*. The blessedness includes material prosperity as well as spiritual happiness, cp. *Prov.* 3<sup>9</sup>, 10, 22<sup>4</sup>.

2, 3. One of the signal marks of God's favour to the righteous was for him to see his prosperous state enjoyed by his sons : *Mighty in the land shall be his seed* ; the word *mighty* (*gibbôr*) is not altogether appropriate in this connexion, for it is used mostly in a warlike sense ; it may have been chosen on account of its initial letter, the third one of

the alphabet. Some commentators would read *gebîr*, "lord"; but this is not to be commended, as it is an extremely rare word, occurring elsewhere only in Gen. 27<sup>29, 37</sup>.

4-7. These verses describe the conduct and happy lot of him who lives in the fear of Yahweh; the words *To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness* are to be understood in the same sense as in Ps. 97<sup>11</sup>, Isa. 58<sup>10</sup> *i.e.*, the light of prosperity which disperses the darkness of poverty, see also Prov. 4<sup>18, 19</sup>; this induces him to be *gracious and merciful*. In what follows there is not a strictly logical sequence, owing, no doubt, to the exigencies of the acrostic form of the psalm. This is also the case in vv. 8-10, where the stability of the upright man, his generosity to the poor, and his prosperous state, interchange with references to the wicked; in these latter the psalmist's thoughts are of an unbeautiful nature; but he wishes to place in contrast the merited lot of the righteous with the deserts of the wicked.

### *Religious Teaching*

What is striking here is the psalmist's optimism; unlike many others, he does not contemplate the other side of the picture, which shows how often the godly suffer adversity. Nevertheless, the happy frame of mind of him who, with soul-felt trust in God, looks on the bright side of things, is well worth cultivating.

## PSALM 113

THIS is the first of a group of psalms known as the *Hallel* ("Praise") in Rabbinical writings—namely, Pss. 113-118. The group is often spoken of as the "Egyptian Hallel" (in reference to 114<sup>1</sup>, "When Israel went forth from Egypt"), to distinguish it from what is called the "Great Hallel", Ps. 136, and from the group 146-148, which, on account of the frequently expressed note of praise in them, was also called *Hallel*. But it is the group 113-118 which is usually spoken of as *the Hallel*; and these psalms were, from long before the beginning of the Christian era, the special ones for the great festivals of Passover (*Pesah*), Tabernacles (*Sukhôth*), and Weeks (*Shabu'ôth*); and when the feast of Dedication (*Hanukkah*) was instituted in 164 B.C. (1 Macc. 4<sup>52-59</sup>), they became likewise the special psalms sung during this feast.

This, like the other psalms of the group, belongs to a comparatively late period; this is suggested by the utilization of thoughts and expressions occurring in earlier psalms.

The metre is irregular.

*Hallelujah.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Praise, ye servants of Yahweh,                           | praise the name of Yahweh,                   |
| 2. Blessed be the name of Yahweh,                           | from henceforth, even for ever;              |
| 3. From the rising of the sun to the<br>going-down thereof, | the name of Yahweh is praised.               |
| 4. Exalted over all nations is Yahweh,                      | his glory is above the heavens.              |
| 5 <sup>a</sup> . ° Who is like Yahweh our God               | 6 <sup>b</sup> . in heaven and earth,        |
| 5 <sup>b</sup> . That dwelleth on high                      | 6 <sup>a</sup> . that looketh down below ° ? |
| 7. He raiseth the poor from the dust,                       | from the ash-heap he lifteth the needy,      |
| 8. ° Making him to sit ° with princes,                      | with the princes of his people;              |
| 9. Causing the barren to dwell in a house,                  | a joyful mother of children. °               |

*Text-critical Notes*

5. 6. The half-lines of these *vv.* have got misplaced, as the sense shows. 8. Read with GS, לְהוֹשִׁיבֵי for לְהוֹשִׁיבֵי, "to make to sit"; for the *hireq compaginis* in the participial forms in *vv.* 6 ff. see GK 90 m. 9. "Hallelujah", with G, is the title of the next psalm.

1-3. The worshippers of Yahweh, His *servants*, are called upon to *praise the name of Yahweh*, cp. Ps. 135<sup>1</sup>; the name is the manifestation of the Person of Yahweh. The phrase *from henceforth and for ever* is a frequent one in the psalms of the later period (115<sup>18</sup>, 121<sup>8</sup>, 125<sup>2</sup>, 131<sup>8</sup>). The ideal of praise being offered to God the live-long day is beautifully expressed in the words *From the rising of the sun . . .*

4-6. The universalistic note, *Exalted over all nations is Yahweh*, marks the psalmist as belonging to that enlightened section of the people whose outlook is illustrated in the book of *Jonah*. The Hebrew construction of *vv.* 5<sup>b</sup>: *That dwelleth on high*, and 6<sup>a</sup>: *That looketh down below*, is difficult; literally rendered they run: "That maketh high to dwell", and "That maketh low to see", and their meaning is clear from Ps. 114, cp. also Ps. 138<sup>6</sup>.

7-9. These verses are taken from 1 Sam. 2<sup>8</sup> and 5, in part verbally.

*Religious Teaching*

It is impossible to read a psalm such as this, in which the threefold mention of the *name* of God occurs so impressively, without recalling the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be thy name". We have here a striking illustration of the fact that Christ accepted Jewish conceptions, even though in their origin the germ of truth contained in them was intermixed with superstitious elements. The identification of a name with the personality of the bearer of it goes back to very early times; but we are here concerned with the "Name" of God, and the central point of importance is that, according to ancient Hebrew belief, it was God himself who revealed his "Name" (Exod. 3<sup>14</sup>).

We need further to realize that in communicating his "Name" to certain men, he laid on them the responsibility of presenting him to the world as a whole. If their standards of religious life and thought are too low, they may profane his holy "Name", cp. Am. 2<sup>7</sup>, and

defile him in the eyes of men. On the other hand, if they rightly appreciate his character and demands, and present him to mankind as he would be understood, they will hallow his "Name".

### PSALM 114

THE often referred-to story of the flight from Egypt was so familiar that the psalmist merely mentions the great event without giving details, as in Ps. 105<sup>23-38</sup>. Similarly in dealing with the entry into Canaan, which is merely a summary. But it is a remarkable example of concise, yet vivid, description, reminiscent of some of the prophetic discourses. In his enthusiasm and excited imagination, the psalmist permits himself to indulge in poetical exaggeration, and he pictures the very mountains and hills as moved to wonder and awe by the mighty acts of God; and the whole earth is called upon to tremble at his presence (cp. Ps. 96<sup>9</sup>). As belonging to the "Hallel", this psalm was, of course, sung at all the great festivals; but, besides this, it was, as might be expected, one of the proper psalms for the Passover festival (see further, Vol. I, pp. 100 f.).

The psalm may possibly belong to exilic times, but a post-exilic date is more probable; see, further, the notes on this.

The text has come down in perfect condition. With the exception of v. 7, which has 4 : 3, the metre is 3 : 3.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. When Israel came forth from Egypt,                | the house of Jacob from a people of<br>strange-tongue, |
| 2. Judah became his sanctuary,                       | Israel his dominion.                                   |
| 3. The sea saw it, and fled,                         | Jordan turned backwards;                               |
| 4. The mountains skipped like rams,                  | the hills like the young of the flock.                 |
| 5. What hast thou, O sea, that thou fleest,          | O Jordan, that thou turnest backwards?                 |
| 6. Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams,             | ye hills like the young of the flock?                  |
| 7. Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the<br>Lord, | at the presence of the God of Jacob,                   |
| 8. Who turned the rock to a pool,                    | the flint to a spring of water!                        |

1, 2. The psalmist compresses centuries of history in these two opening verses, and indicates that at the Exodus Israel was constituted a nation. *Israel* is often used in post-exilic times as including both the northern and southern kingdoms. *The house of Jacob* as a parallel to *Israel* is doubtless in reference to the fact that it was the family of Jacob that went down into Egypt (Gen. 46<sup>2-7</sup>). The Egyptians are spoken of as a *people of strange-tongue*, meaning probably, as in Isa. 33<sup>19</sup>, a stammering tongue, as it would seem to the Israelites who did not understand the Egyptian language. Hebrew was the divine language, in comparison with which every other was barbaric. In much later days it was taught that prayers must be offered in Hebrew, otherwise the angels would be unable to present them before the Almighty.

An indication of the date of the psalm is contained in the words : *Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion* ; Judah being mentioned first, and designated God's *sanctuary*, points to a time when Jerusalem was the centre of worship. In contrast to this presentation of Judah, the description of *Israel* as God's *dominion* is not without significance. The words reflect the thought of a time when the temple-worship had reached its full development ; and this can hardly have been the case until well after the time of Ezra, so that the date of the psalm is likely to have been the early Greek period, some time during the third century B.C.

3-6. In these verses Nature itself is represented as cowed and wonder-struck at what is taking place ; in reference to Exod. 14<sup>21, 22</sup> it is said : *The sea saw it and fled* ; then, as a parallel to this, the psalmist recalls the episode, though happening long after, of the crossing of the Jordan, recounted in Josh. 3<sup>12-17</sup>, *Jordan turneth backwards*. The picture of the *mountains* that *skip like rams*, and the *hills like the young of the flock*, i.e., the lambs, was doubtless suggested by Judg. 5<sup>5</sup>, Ps. 68<sup>8</sup>, not by Exod. 19<sup>18</sup>, where we must read, with the Septuagint and a number of Hebrew manuscripts, "all the people trembled greatly" (not "the whole mount quaked greatly"), for the Hebrew verb for "tremble" (*ḥarad*) is used almost always in reference to persons (Isa. 41<sup>5</sup>, of the earth, and Ezek. 26<sup>18</sup> are the only exceptions). In vv. 5, 6 the psalmist transports himself in imagination back into the times of which he is thinking ; the verbs in these rhetorical questions are in the present.

7, 8. The whole earth is called upon to tremble at the presence of the Lord ('*Adon* is written without the article here only) ; why the earth is to tremble (the verb is not *ḥarad*, but *hûl*, lit. to "writhe") is because of the wondrous acts of the Lord ; the *God of Jacob turned the rock to a pool, and the flint to a spring of water* (cp. Exod. 15<sup>25</sup>, 17<sup>6</sup>, Num. 22<sup>8-11</sup>, Deut. 8<sup>15</sup>) ; the psalmist allows himself some embellishment of the records. The concluding reference to this giving of water in the wilderness, which, compared with the other wonder-works spoken of, was of greatly less importance, must strike one, at first sight, as somewhat incongruous. As a matter of fact, it is highly significant. The Passover feast, of which, as we have seen, this was one of the proper psalms, was celebrated in the month Nisan (March-April), when the latter rains were ceasing and the period of drought was beginning ; the psalmist, therefore, recalls the divine power of giving water, so that, although there is going to be a period of dryness, the God of Jacob will again show forth his power in due time, and turn the dry land into springs of water.

### *Religious Teaching*

In this psalm, which commemorates the stupendous event when Israel became a nation, and when the knowledge of Yahweh was accorded

to them, we have an element to which reference has already been made—namely, the recognition of, and gratitude for, past mercies. Then there is also the oft-expressed belief in Yahweh as the God of Nature; somewhat *naïve* as the expression of this belief may be, there is the underlying conviction that Nature is subject to the will of the divine Creator.

## PSALM 115

THE construction of this psalm points clearly to its liturgical use; which parts were sung by the priests, the temple choir, and the congregation, respectively, cannot well be decided with certainty; the opinions of commentators differ on the subject. The divisions of the psalm are, however, fairly obvious, and help to indicate by whom the different parts were sung. Thus, *vv.* 1–8, by their content and by the use of the plural, “not unto us,” “our God is in the heavens,” suggest that they were sung by the temple choir and the congregation. *Vv.* 9–11, with the threefold refrain, were undoubtedly sung antiphonally, perhaps by a priest and the congregation, the latter taking up the refrain. *Vv.* 12–15, as the contents indicate, were sung by the priests; and the final verses, 16–18, by priests, temple choir, and congregation.

The contents of the psalm will be more appropriately dealt with in the section on *Religious Teaching*.

The form of composition points with certainty to a late post-exilic date for the psalm; similarly the expression “house of Aaron”, the ruling aristocracy; and “Israel” applied to the Jewish nation as a whole. The text is almost wholly intact.

The metre is, with one or two possible exceptions, 3 : 3.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Not unto us, Yahweh, not unto us,   | but to thy name give glory ;<br>because of thy love and thy truth. |
| 2. Wherefore should the nations say :  | “ Where, then, is their God ? ”                                    |
| 3. But our God is in the heavens,  | whatsoever he pleased hath he done.                                |
| 4. Their idols are silver and gold,  | the work of the hands of man.                                      |
| 5. A mouth is theirs, but they speak not ;   | eyes have they, but see not ;                                      |
| 6. Ears they have, but hear not ;  | a nose they have, but smell not ;                                  |
| 7.        Their hands,—but they feel not,<br>Their feet,—but they walk not,<br>They speak not through their throat.          |  |
| 8. Like them shall be their makers,  | all they that trust in them.                                       |
| 9. O Israel, trust in Yahweh,  | their help and shield is he ;                                      |
| 10. House of Aaron, trust in Yahweh,   | their help and shield is he ;                                      |
| 11. Ye that fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh,  | their help and shield is he.                                       |
| 12.        May Yahweh ° remember us ° and bless us,<br>May he bless the house of Israel,<br>May he bless the house of Aaron, |  |
| 13. May he bless them that fear Yahweh,  | the small ones with the great ;                                    |
| 14. May Yahweh give you increase,  | to you and to your children.                                       |
| 15. Blessed are ye of Yahweh,  | the maker of heaven and earth.                                     |

16. The heavens are Yahweh's heavens, but the earth he gave to man.  
 17. The dead praise not Yahweh, nor all that go down into silence;  
 18. But we will bless Yah, from henceforth for evermore.  
 Hallelujah.

## Text-critical Notes

1. It is more likely that a half-line has fallen out here than that the last half-line is a later insertion. 12. Read יִזְכְּרֵנוּ for יִזְכְּרֵנִי, "hath remembered us".

1-8. The real point of the words with which this psalm abruptly begins, *Not unto us, Yahweh, not unto us, but to thy name give glory*, comes out in the second verse: *Wherefore should the nations say, "Where, then, is their God?"* From this it is evident that the Jews had suffered a defeat, or were being oppressed by some Gentile foe, who had scoffed at the idea that God could help his people. The psalmist implicitly expresses the belief that God *will* save his people from their enemy, but, in his deep trust and reverence, he repudiates the idea that the coming deliverance will be due to the efforts of his people; not to them, but to God, in spite of the enemy's scoffing, shall *glory* be given. It seems to us probable, therefore, that in the second part of the first verse some words have fallen out, such as, "For thy name's sake grant us deliverance" (cp. Ps. 54<sup>1</sup>), or something to this effect. The psalmist continues: so far from God being unable to help his people, he is *in the heavens*, whence he guides all things on earth, and dispenses his lovingkindness, cp. Ps. 36<sup>5</sup>. The adversity of his people is for good, being according to his will: *Whatsoever he pleased hath he done*. The scathing mockery which is uttered against the idols of the Gentiles may well have been inspired by such passages as Isa. 41<sup>21-24</sup>, 44<sup>9-20</sup>; the makers of such useless things are no better than the things themselves: *Like them shall be their makers, all they that trust in them*.

9-11, 12-15. In contrast to the reliance placed by the Gentiles on their idols, there follows the very effective exhortation, sung antiphonally, calling upon all grades of the people to *trust in Yahweh, their help and shield*: first the whole nation of *Israel*, then their spiritual rulers, the *house of Aaron*, and then those that *fear Yahweh*. There is some uncertainty as to who are meant by these last; many commentators hold that proselytes are meant; the objection to this is that in the next three verses, which are a responsive repetition of the preceding, they that *fear Yahweh* must refer to Israel as a whole, for the words, *The small ones with the great; May Yahweh give you increase, to you and to your children*, cannot refer only to proselytes; it seems more probable that they that *fear Yahweh* is a comprehensive summing-up of priests and people.

16-18. In the final outburst of praise which concludes the psalm, mention is made of the heavens above, God's dwelling-place, the earth beneath, man's sphere, and the underworld, the abode of the departed;

this is done to emphasize the fact that God in heaven is worshipped by those living on earth; they in the underworld cannot do so; therefore the final words: *But we will bless Yah, from henceforth for evermore.* On the abbreviated form of the divine name see Ps. 68<sup>18</sup>, "for evermore" is to be understood in the sense of a length of time, as in such passages as Pss. 21<sup>6</sup>, 22<sup>26</sup>, 61<sup>7</sup>.

### *Religious Teaching*

This is one of three psalms, and they are the only ones, in which a pure and perfect monotheism is expressly taught; the others are 86<sup>9, 10</sup>, 135<sup>15, 17</sup>. In spite of the teaching of Deutero-Isaiah, it is found again and again in the psalms that the existence of other gods is either definitely stated, or implied (*e.g.*, 81<sup>9</sup>, 86<sup>8</sup>, 89<sup>6</sup>, 95<sup>3</sup>, 96<sup>4, 5</sup>); naturally, Yahweh was believed in as infinitely above other gods, as of an utterly different nature, and as incomparably mightier; but a pure monotheistic belief does not recognize the possibility of any gods, however inferior, other than the One God.

One thing in this psalm which betrays an inadequate conception of God is contained in the words: *The dead praise not Yahweh, nor all that go down into silence*; this traditional Sheol doctrine restricts God's relationship to man to this world; and thus fails to apprehend the divine nature (see further on Ps. 73).

On the other hand, in the expression "trust in Yahweh", and in the absolute conviction of his protecting help, this psalm stands as one of the most impressive in the Psalter.

### PSALM 116

As indicated in the psalm itself (*vv.* 17-19), it was sung either immediately before, or during, the sacrifice of the *Tôdah*, or "thank-offering". On Egyptian and Assyrian pictorial inscriptions it is seen that the offering of sacrifices was accompanied by instrumental music, and doubtless by song too. From Am. 5<sup>22, 23</sup>, we may gather that similarly in Israel both instrumental music and singing took place during the offering of sacrifices; see also Isa. 30<sup>29</sup>, 38<sup>20</sup>, 2 Chron. 5<sup>13</sup>. Our psalm is thus a thanksgiving to God, sung during the temple-worship, in recognition of deliverance from some dire peril, see *v.* 3; and it was sung by an individual, as indicated again and again, the first person being used throughout; and this, not collectively of the people, but of an individual, see especially *vv.* 8, 14, 18.

The question as to whether the psalm is to be regarded as forming



a unity or not is a difficult one. The Septuagint makes two psalms of it, *vv.* 1-9 and 10-19. There can be no doubt that *vv.* 1-9 are self-contained, and that *v.* 9 makes a fitting conclusion. Further, the text of the beginning of the second part (*vv.* 10, 11) is manifestly out of order, and this might conceivably have been due to the adoption of a portion of some other psalm which was joined on to the first part. There are also some repetitions in *vv.* 10-19 of words in *vv.* 1-9, owing to which it could be argued that the two parts were originally distinct, as such repetitions are unlikely to recur in one and the same psalm. In spite of these considerations, however, the unity of the psalm is not necessarily to be denied when its nature is realized; for we have here the heart's outpouring of one who has come safely through some grave danger, and whose whole being is overflowing with gratitude to God; when such an one records his innermost thoughts and feelings he is not concerned with the niceties proper to a carefully constructed composition. The sequence of his uttered thoughts may be expressed somewhat as follows: His first impulse, when recalling the peril through which he has safely passed, is to recognize the Author of his deliverance, and to offer him thanks; the turmoil of his heart is assuaged, and he can live in quietude of mind among his friends again. But then it suddenly comes into his mind that though in the midst of the peril his trust was in God, nevertheless doubts did arise; this he recalls in humble regret. But he is safe now, so that his thoughts naturally revert to God, and he is anxious to show forth by deed as well as by word the sincerity of his gratitude. That he should, in these circumstances, repeat some of the words he had already uttered is a very human and natural proceeding. Most commentators delete the words of repetition; they may be right, but it may, at any rate, be claimed that the considerations adduced offer some justification for regarding the psalm as a unity.

The late post-exilic date of the psalm is indicated by the occurrence of Aramaisms in *vv.* 7, 12, 16, and also by the use of the term *Hasidim*, "godly ones" (*v.* 15), in reference to the particular group among the people.

The text has, in *vv.* 1-9, on the whole, been well preserved; but in *vv.* 10-19 there is some dislocation. The metre is somewhat irregular; 3:2 predominates, but 3:3 is frequent; 2:2 comes in here and there effectively.

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. I love ° Yahweh °, for he heareth  | ° the cry of ° my supplication;             |
| 2. For he inclined his ear unto me    | ° in the day ° I cried.                     |
| 3. The cords of death encompassed me, | ° and the horrors of ° Sheol ° confronted ° |
|                                       | me;   |
| Trouble and distress I experienced;   | 4. Then I called on the name of             |
|                                       | Yahweh:                                     |
|                                       | "Ah, Yahweh,                                |
|                                       | Deliver my soul."                           |

5. Gracious is Yahweh, and righteous,      yea, our God is merciful;  
 6. Yahweh preserveth the helpless,      I languish, and he helpeth me.  
 7. Return, O my soul, to thy rest,      for Yahweh hath dealt bountifully with thee.  
 8.      ° He delivered ° my soul from death,  
      ° Mine eyes ° from tears,  
      ° My feet ° from stumbling.  
 9. I will walk before Yahweh      ° in the land ° of the living.  
 10. I trusted ° in Yahweh, and spake ° :      " I am greatly ° humbled ° " ;  
 11. ° For ° I said in my alarm :      ° " all trust is in vain. " °  
 12. How shall I make return to Yahweh      ° for all ° his benefits to me ?  
 13. The cup of deliverance will I raise,      and call on the name of Yahweh.  
 14. My vows to Yahweh will I pay      ° in the presence ° of all his people.  
 15. Precious in the eyes of Yahweh      is ° the death ° of his saints.  
 16.      " Ah, Yahweh,  
      ° I ° am thy servant ;  
      I am thy servant,  
      A son of ° thy people °,  
      Thou hast loosed my bonds. "
17. I will offer ° the sacrifice of thanks-      and call on the name of Yahweh ;  
      giving,      ° in the presence ° of all his people,  
 18. My vows to Yahweh will I pay      in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.  
 19. In the courts of the house of Yahweh,      Hallelujah.

## Text-critical Notes

1. The Hebrew text has no object to " I love ", so that this must be obtained by a slight alteration in the order of the words. Read קוֹלִי for קוֹל, " my voice ", or " cry ". 2. Read, with S, בַּיּוֹם for בְּיָמַי, " in my days ". 3. In late Hebrew the word means " a rope ", and perhaps we should render " ropes " instead of " horrors "; it gives a better parallelism. " Confronted me " is lit. " found me ". 8. Read חָלַצְתָּ for חָלַצְתָּ, " thou didst deliver "; Yahweh is not being addressed. Read עֵינִי for עֵינִי, " mine eye ", and רַגְלִי for רַגְלִי, " my foot ". 9. Read בְּאַרְצוֹת for בְּאַרְצוֹת, " in the lands of ". 10. Read וְאֶחָדָם for וְאֶחָדָם, " when I shall speak ". Read עָנִיתִי for עָנִיתִי, " for ". 11. Add כִּי, " for ". Read כָּל-הָאָדָם כֹּזֵב (cp. Deut. 32<sup>20</sup>) for כָּל-הָאָדָם כֹּזֵב, " every man is a liar ". 12. Read כָּל for כָּל, " all ". 14. Read, also in v. 18, נִנְדָּה for נִנְדָּה, a form not occurring elsewhere in the O.T. 15. Read תַּמְתִּיךָ for תַּמְתִּיךָ, a form otherwise unknown. 16. Read אֲנִי for אֲנִי, " for I (am) ". Read, with Wutz, אֲמִתִּי (cp. Gen. 25<sup>18</sup>, Num. 25<sup>18</sup>, Ps. 117<sup>1</sup>, but always in the plur.), for אֲמִתִּי, " thine handmaid ".

1-9. The psalmist expresses his *love* for Yahweh, called forth by the answer to his prayer when in grievous danger. The verb used expresses human affection, and with Yahweh as its object occurs in the *Psalms* elsewhere only in 31<sup>23</sup>, 97<sup>10</sup>, 145<sup>20</sup>; on the other hand, its use is frequent when the object is the law, the commandments, and the name of Yahweh. His feelings are the deeper in that his life had been in jeopardy: *the cords of death encompassed me*, cp. Ps. 18<sup>4</sup>; death is figuratively represented as a cruel personality who entangles men with cords and ropes, and drags them down to the underworld, *Sheôl*. In his straits the psalmist *called on the name of Yahweh*; and because Yahweh is *gracious, righteous, and merciful, he preserveth the helpless*; the word for *helpless* is literally " simple-minded "; used here, therefore, of one who has unquestioning faith; there is probably

a special significance in the use of this word in view of the psalmist's confession in 10, 11. His mind is now at *rest* since *Yahweh hath dealt bountifully with him*; he has escaped death, and therefore he can *walk before Yahweh in the land of the living*.

10-11. In what follows we have a passage of great difficulty, which has always caused commentators much trouble. That there should be differences of opinion as to its meaning, and a variety of suggested emendations of the text, is in the nature of things; for as the text stands it is impossible to make sense of it. We have already indicated in the introduction to this psalm what we believe to be the meaning of the passage—namely, that in spite of his trust in Yahweh, so great was the psalmist's alarm at the danger in which he found himself, that he had a momentary doubt as to whether Yahweh could help him; he recalls this: *I trusted in Yahweh*; and then he said to himself, *I am greatly humbled*, for in his fear he had given up hope: *All trust is in vain*, lit. "a deceptive thing". The emendation involved is somewhat drastic, it is granted (see crit. note); but it must be allowed that the mention of men, "All men are liars", lit. "are lying", is extremely inappropriate. The first half of this v. (11) is taken from Ps. 31<sup>22</sup>, and the possibility cannot be altogether excluded that the very apt second half also stood in our psalm at one time, viz. "I am cut off from before thine eyes". But that is, of course, pure surmise; and, as things stand, we must make the best emendation we can. It may, at any rate, be claimed that the suggested emendation fits in with the context, and gives good sense.

In the vv. which follow (12-19) the psalmist reverts to what is foremost in his mind—viz., how to show his gratitude for what God had done for him: *How shall I make return to Yahweh for all his benefits to me?* The illogical sequence of the verses here, and the wrong order in which the ritual acts are mentioned, make it highly probable that there is some dislocation of the text. It will be noticed that 14, 18 are identical; one or the other must, therefore, be deleted. Judging from Lev. 23<sup>37</sup>, Deut. 32<sup>28</sup>, Ezek. 20<sup>28</sup>, the order of the ritual acts should be: the offering of the sacrifice, the drink-offering, the vows. Tentatively, therefore, we suggest that the verses ran originally in this order, omitting v. 14 altogether:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 12. <i>How shall I make return to Yahweh</i>           | <i>for all his benefits to me?</i>        |
| 17. <i>I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving,</i> | <i>and call on the name of Yahweh;</i>    |
| 13. <i>The cup of deliverance will I raise,</i>        | <i>and call on the name of Yahweh;</i>    |
| 18. <i>My vows to Yahweh will I pay</i>                | <i>in the presence of all his people,</i> |
| 19. <i>In the courts of the house of Yahweh,</i>       | <i>in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.</i> |

Vv. 15, 16 then make a fitting conclusion; by fulfilling his religious duties the psalmist has shown himself to be Yahweh's *servant*; the triumphant words, *Thou hast loosed my bonds*, i.e., the bonds of death, so that life is now before him, form an effective conclusion.

By the *cup of deliverance* is meant the drink-offering (*neseḳ*) poured out before the altar in recognition of the deliverance granted by Yahweh; with the ritual act of *raising* may be compared the similar action in connexion with the "waving" of the firstfruits before the altar, technically called the *Tenuḫah* (Lev. 23<sup>10</sup> and 18<sup>11</sup>). The words, *Precious in the eyes of Yahweh is the death of his saints* are a little difficult; one would rather expect the life of the saints to be precious, for which reason the life of the psalmist has been preserved; but the words are probably to be understood in the sense that the death of the saints is too precious a thing in God's sight to be often permitted. The repetition of *I am thy servant* marks not merely the stress laid on the psalmist's self-dedication to the service of God, but in joining the repeated words to *the son of thy people—i.e., the chosen people*—it is intended to express the permanence of his being a servant.

### *Religious Teaching*

Apart from the recognition of God's mercy in delivering from peril, and the gratitude for this, expressed in so many psalms, there are two special points of great religious significance which must be emphasized. The first is that the thanksgiving is proclaimed in the midst of the congregation; the grateful heart must bear witness before others of what God has done, thereby glorifying the name of God and strengthening the faith of others in him. There is also, doubtless, the desire that others should share in the joy felt by one who had nearly lost his life, but had now, by God's mercy, recovered it. Spontaneously there arises in the mind the teaching of the Gospel: "And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost . . ." (Luke 15<sup>8-10</sup>).

The second point is the ardent impulse to show forth gratitude to God both by word and act; it is not only the offering of sacrifice with appropriate words of praise which, according to the conceptions of the times, was acceptable to God; even more significant is the affirmation: "I am thy servant"; there lay the true and enduring expression of gratitude; the definite self-dedication to carry out the will of the Master.

### PSALM 117

THIS cannot be regarded as more than a fragment which has become detached from its context, presumably through the carelessness of a copyist. Whether it formed part of the preceding or of the following

psalm, as in some manuscripts, or whether the psalm to which it originally belonged has been lost, must remain uncertain, though the latter is far more likely, for in neither of the psalms in question would it be appropriate. To justify its brevity, thereby postulating it as an entity, by comparing it with the Song of Miriam (Exod. 15<sup>21</sup>), as some commentators have done, is hardly to the point, for that song was not intended for liturgical worship. The psalmist, in his enthusiastic gratitude for God's favour shown to his people, calls upon the Gentiles to praise him for his mercy toward Israel (cp. Ps. 47<sup>1, 2</sup>); the thought seems hardly logical as it stands, though in such a psalm, for example, as the 100th, it would be appropriate. The content, therefore, supports the view that it is a fragment from some other psalm.

The metre is 3 : 3.

1. Praise Yahweh, all ye nations,
2. For his love over us is great,

laud him, all ye peoples,  
and the faithfulness of Yahweh is ever-  
lasting.

Hallelujah.

The first verse is quoted in Rom. 15<sup>11</sup> to show that Jew and Gentile are to be united in one Church. With the words, *For his love over us is great*, cp. Ps. 103<sup>11, 17</sup>, and with the concluding words cp. Ps. 100<sup>5</sup>. The universalistic note points to the goal of the conversion of the Gentiles.

## PSALM 118

THE insight into the liturgical ritual and worship of the temple during post-exilic times which this psalm gives, makes it, from this point of view, one of the most important in the Psalter. It is the last psalm composing the *Hallel* (see p. 99), sung at all the feasts; but it occupied a special position at the Feast of Tabernacles, since it was one of the proper psalms for this feast.

The construction of the psalm shows that it was sung antiphonally, but opinions differ as to details. While it is impossible to state with any degree of certainty to whom the different verses are to be assigned, there is some justification for assuming the following arrangement:

*Vv.* 1-4 clearly form an introduction; the first half of each verse here would seem to have been sung as a solo, presumably by one of the priests, while the second half, in the nature of a refrain, was taken up by the whole of the Levitical choir. As will be seen, the sequel suggests that this was sung in the outer court of the temple, near the entrance, but within the temple precincts; it was here that priests

and choir awaited the procession of worshippers coming up the hill of Zion to the sanctuary. *Vv.* 5-21 are all in the first person, and were, therefore, sung by an individual, in reference to himself, not in the name of the people; *vv.* 8, 9 should make this clear. It is, however, possible that *vv.* 10-12, 15, 16, 19, 20 were later insertions; we make the suggestion merely as a possibility (see the exegetical notes on these verses). This individual, we may assume, was among those who formed the procession ascending the hill of Zion. It is true no direct mention is here made of such a procession, but it is implied in *vv.* 19, 20, and in the final section of the psalm it is directly referred to. In addition, the procession at this festival is described in the Mishnah (see further, the exegetical notes), which echoes traditional usage. *Vv.* 22-29 were sung antiphonally by the worshippers forming the festal procession, and the Levitical choir. The whole psalm thus presents us with a vivid picture of the temple-worship during the Feast of Tabernacles.

The occasion on which this psalm was sung in public worship, however—an opinion held by most, but not all, modern commentators—presents a difficulty which must be dealt with, for it is one which is met with in some other psalms. The difficulty is this: if the main body of the psalm was the utterance of an *individual*, or even, as Hans Schmidt holds, of three different individuals, how can the psalm as a whole have been used by *the whole body of worshippers* during what was probably the most important festal celebration of the year? The answer is to be sought, we believe, in recognizing that the psalm has a history behind it. This psalm, like certain others, is one of thanksgiving for deliverance from peril, and in its original form consisted of the central part only, *vv.* 5-21, with the possible exception of 10-12, 15, 16, 19, 20. Psalms like this, because they expressed so fully the thoughts and emotions of any who had passed through similar experiences, were adopted for general use in worship. This being so, additions were made to the original kernel of a psalm in order to adapt it to congregational use. In the present case this was done by prefacing it with the opening *vv.* 1-4. Thus, in the second stage of its history the psalm ended with *v.* 21, and its original individual character came to be understood of the people collectively. The final stage in the history of the psalm was when it became specifically used as a festal psalm, at the Feast of Tabernacles; when this took place there are no means of ascertaining, any more than it is known when the "Hallel", as such, originated; we know only that it was so used. But the reason why it was chosen as the special psalm for the Feast of Tabernacles may well have been as follows: on each day of this feast a procession took place, the worshippers all carrying palm-branches (*lulab*); on the seventh day this was performed seven

times (Mishnah, *Sukhôth* iv. 4); during the procession the people shouted *Hoshi'ah-na'* (Hosanna = "Save now") from *v.* 25 of this psalm. From this the seventh day of the feast was known as *Yôm Hoshi'ah-na'* ("Hosanna day"), and the palm-branch came to be called *Hoshi'ah-na*. This word was, therefore, a kind of catch-word in connexion with the ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles. Now in our psalm we have in *vv.* 14, 21 the words: "He is (or thou art) become to me for deliverance, or *saving*, *Lîshu'ah*, which is from the same root, and contains the same thought, as *Hoshi'ah-na'*. Knowing, as we do, the fondness of the Hebrews for catch-words, it is quite possible that we have here what was considered an appropriate link with the hallowed expression belonging specifically to the Feast of Tabernacles; hence its choice for the psalm of the festival. Added to this there were the opening verses (1-4) which had been attached to the psalm, making it appropriate for festal use; and the contents of the body of the psalm, being now understood in a collective sense, emphasized this. The point of attachment between the psalm as it now stood with the final addition was skilfully made by beginning this latter with the words: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner . . .", on the meaning of which, see the exegetical notes. *Vv.* 19, 20, and possibly also 10-12, 15, 16, were added at the same time.

The date of the psalm, owing to the developed form of worship implied, must, at any rate in its present form, be late post-exilic. The text has been well preserved; there are but few corruptions. The metre is a difficulty; opinions differ; some hold that it is almost uniformly 3 : 3 with 3 : 2 here and there, while others maintain that it is 3 : 2 throughout. We hold the former view, recognizing that there is something to be said for the latter.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good,   | For his love is eternal;                      |
| 2. Let ° the house of ° Israel say :        | For his love is eternal;                      |
| 3. Let the house of Aaron ° say ° :         | For his love is eternal;                      |
| 4. Let them that fear Yahweh ° say ° :      | For his love is eternal.                      |
| 5. In distress I called on Yah,             | ° he brought me forth into freedom °.         |
| 6. Yahweh is mine, I fear not               | what men may do unto me ;                     |
| 7. Yahweh is mine, ° he helpeth me °,       | and I look in triumph on foes.                |
| 8. 'Tis better to trust in Yahweh           | than confide in man ;                         |
| 9. 'Tis better to trust in Yahweh           | than confide in princes.                      |
| 10. All the nations surrounded me,          | in the name of Yahweh ° I trod them down ° ;  |
| 11. They surrounded me, yea, they           | in the name of Yahweh ° I trod them down ° ;  |
| surrounded me ;                             | ° in the name of Yahweh ° I trod them down °. |
| 12. They surrounded me like bees ° the      |   |
| honeycomb °,                                |   |
| 13. ° I was sorely thrust at ° that I might |   |
| fall,                                       | but Yahweh helped me.                         |
| 14. My strength and ° my song ° is Yah,     | and he is become my deliverer.                |
| 15. Hark, a cry of joy and victory          | in the tents of the righteous ;               |
| The right-hand of Yahweh doeth              | 16. The right-hand of Yahweh is               |
| mightily,                                   | exalted ;                                     |

17. I shall not die, but live,  
 18. Yahweh did chasten me sorely,  
 19. Open me the gates of righteousness,  
 20. This is the gate of Yahweh,  
 21. I will thank thee because thou hast answered me,  
 22. The stone which the builders rejected,  
 23. From Yahweh hath this come to pass,  
 24. This is the day Yahweh hath ordained,  
 25. Ah, Yahweh, save now,  
 26. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh,  
 27. Yahweh is God,  
 ° May he give us light.  
 ° Marshal the procession with leafy-branches,  
 Unto the horns of the altar.
- and recount ° the works ° of Yahweh.  
 but to death he did not deliver me.  
 I will enter them and praise Yah ;  
 the righteous shall enter therein.  
 and art become my deliverer.  
 is become the head of the corner ;  
 it is ° a wonder-work ° in our eyes  
 let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
 Ah, Yahweh, grant prosperity.  
 we bless you from the house of Yahweh ;
28. My God art thou, I will thank thee,      My God, I will extol thee.  
 29. Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good,      for his love is eternal.

## Text-critical Notes

2. Add, with G, בִּית. 3. 4. Read יִאֲמַר as in v. 2, for the plur. יֹאמְרוּ. 5. Read (see 2 Sam. 22<sup>29</sup>) וַיֵּצֵא לְפָנֶיךָ אֹתִי for וַיֵּצֵא בְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה "Yah answered me in a wide place". 7. On the form בְּעֶלְוֵי see GK 119i 124k. 10. Read, with Kittel, אֲמַלִּים (אֲמַלִּל) for אֲמַלִּים (so, too, in vv. 11, 12), "I will cut them off"; for the form of the suffix see GK 60d, and for the force of the impf. see GK 107b; for the use of the preceding בִּי here see GK 159ee. 12. Add with G, דִּוְלָג, this word does not, however, occur in this sense elsewhere; but cp. Deut. 1<sup>44</sup>. Om. דִּעַכְךָ כְּאֵשׁ קוֹצִים, "they are quenched as the fire of thorns", which gives a half-line too much. 13. Read, with G, דָּחַתָּ דְחִיתִי for דָּחַתָּ דְחִיתִי, "thou didst thrust sore at me". Yahweh is not directly addressed elsewhere in these vv. 14. Read וּמִקְרָהִי for וּמִקְרָה, but see GK 80g. In Exod. 15<sup>3</sup>, from which the passage seems to have been taken (but cp. Isa. 12<sup>2</sup>), G has "my hiding-place", or "refuge" (= בְּתִרְיָי); this may originally have stood here. 16. Om., with many G MSS, the repetition of v. 15<sup>3</sup>. 17. Many MSS have מַעֲשֵׂה, "work of", instead of the plural. 23. Read גִּפְלִאת for גִּפְלִאת. 27. Read וַיֵּאֲר for וַיֵּאֲר "and he gave light". The rendering: *Marshal the procession* . . . is based, in part, on that of G: συστῆσασθε ἑορτὴν ἐν τοῖς πυκάζουσιν, "Set in order the festival with leafy (branches)". For this sense of אֲסַר see 1 Kgs. 20<sup>14</sup>, 2 Chron. 13<sup>3</sup>; for the justification of "procession" as the rendering of אֲסַר here, see Job 26<sup>10</sup>: "He hath worked out a circle (חֶסֶךְ) upon the face of the waters"; the festal procession encircled the altar; and for the rendering "leafy-branches" for עֲבֵרִים see Lev. 23<sup>40</sup>: "And ye shall take you . . . and boughs of thick trees (וַיֵּצֵא עֵץ-עֹבֵר) . . ."; this is in reference to the Feast of Tabernacles.

1-4. This introduction to the psalm of thanksgiving follows the pattern of Ps. 115<sup>9-11</sup> (see the notes there), while the refrain, *For his love is eternal*, is taken from that of Ps. 136. We hold that the *For* is accented in the Hebrew, though this is exceptional. The two parts of each verse were sung antiphonally, as already pointed out. This obviously *congregational* act of worship introducing a psalm of purely personal character supports the view that the two parts did not originally belong together, but that this introduction was put in its present place when the psalm was adapted to public worship.

5. In all that follows the original personal note is now understood collectively of the people as a whole, as in a number of other psalms.



That in some of the verses a collective sense is inappropriate cannot be denied; but it could not be otherwise when an "individual" psalm was thus adapted. This verse is a case in point; the psalmist *called on God in distress*. It may well be that by *distress* the reference is to imprisonment (see Hans Schmidt *in loc.*), from which, as the second half of the verse shows, the psalmist had been liberated: *He brought me forth into freedom* (lit. "a wide place"); these words, taken from 2 Sam. 22<sup>20</sup>, are substituted for the somewhat doubtful Hebrew text. On the abbreviated form of the divine name, *Yah*, see on Ps. 68<sup>18</sup>. In the verses which follow (6-9) the expressions of trust in God are very impressive; where this trust is a firm conviction the threat of men counts for nothing: *Yahweh is mine, I fear not what men may do unto me*, words which seem to be borrowed from Ps. 56<sup>4, 11</sup>; but more, with his help, as the psalmist says: *I look in triumph on foes* (cp. Ps. 59<sup>10</sup>). Far better, therefore, is it *to trust in Yahweh* than *in man* or *princes*. With the "individual" character of the psalm it is a little difficult to reconcile 10-12: *All the nations surrounded me. In the name of Yahweh I trod them down . . .*; this would be appropriate enough in reference to the nation collectively which had overcome its enemies, and now offered thanks to *Yahweh* in whose *name* they had fought—the *all* may be put down to poetical hyperbole—but in reference to an individual these words sound incongruous. The possibility must therefore be recognized of 10-12 having been added when the psalm was adapted to congregational worship. In this connexion it is worth noting that the very unusual simile contained in the words, *they surrounded me like bees the honeycomb*, occurs elsewhere only in Deut. 1<sup>44</sup> (Isa. 7<sup>18</sup> is not a parallel), which may well have been in the mind of the psalmist, and that in that passage the reference is to a nation, the Amorites, surrounding the Israelites. 13, *I was sorely thrust at that I might fall . . .*, which is again thoroughly individualistic, comes very appropriately after 9; this further emphasizes the possibility that 9-11 may have been added later. The psalmist again affirms his trust in God in the words of 14, *My strength and my song is Yah*, quoted from Exod. 15<sup>2</sup>, or Isa. 12<sup>2</sup>; "strength" and "song" are not good parallels, but they occur also in the Isaiah passage, where the Septuagint has "praise" (= "song"); but in the Exod. passage the Septuagint has the better parallel, "refuge" in place of "song"; conceivably "refuge" stood in our verse originally. *My deliverer* is lit. "deliverance", or "saving, to me". The individualistic note recedes again in 15, 16, *Hark, a cry of joy and victory in the tents of the righteous . . .*, for this reads like the triumphal shout of an army, *righteous* because they ascribe their victory to *Yahweh*. So that, once more, we must recognize the possibility of these verses having been inserted when the psalm was adapted to public worship; and again, the words

in 17, *I shall not die but live . . .*, come more appropriately after 14. In a number of manuscripts the text reads: *the work of Yahweh*, in place of the plural, *the works*; if the former is original the reference will be to the special act of divine deliverance to the individual; the plural may be a later correction, and will then refer to many occasions on which divine help had been accorded to the nation. The former accords well with the bitter experience of the individual psalmist (18): *Yahweh did chasten me sorely, but to death he did not deliver me*; therefore he cries (21) *I will thank thee because thou hast answered me, and art become my deliverer* (cp. 14). And now, once more, we have to suggest the possibility of another later insertion, made again for the purpose of adapting the psalm to congregational worship. We have already, in the introductory section to this psalm, mentioned that in 19, 20 the well-known festal procession, which took place during the Feast of Tabernacles, is referred to; these vv. run: *Open me the gates of righteousness, I will enter them and praise Yah; this is the gate of Yahweh, the righteous shall enter therein*. The picture here presented is that of the festal procession which has reached the temple gates, and now seeks admission; one of their number comes forth and calls to the Levites within: *Open me the gates of righteousness, i.e., the gates of the place where righteousness dwells, and through which only the righteous may enter: I will enter them and praise Yah*; thereupon the response comes from the company within the gates (cp. 1-4: *This is the gate of Yahweh, the righteous shall enter therein*). If, now, these two verses were sung or intoned as the procession neared the gate, they belong to congregational worship; and it is for this reason that we suggest their having been inserted when the psalm was adapted to this purpose. It is true, they would come better after 21 which follows 18 very appropriately; and probably this was originally the case.

It is fully realized that these suggestions as to various verses having been inserted later may be distasteful to many readers; but it must be allowed that the procedure is a very natural one, and, indeed, a very edifying one, when the religious instinct feels that the beautiful outpouring of an individual should be adapted to wider use. It explains also why in one and the same psalm both individual and congregational elements appear.

We come now to the last section. This originally began, as suggested, with 19, 20. Then follow the very well-known words: *The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner*. This constitutes the point of attachment with the psalm as originally written; it refers, in the first instance, to him who had been in grievous peril, and had been saved by God's mercy; but it is now adapted and applied to the nation as a whole. The picture is a striking one: just as builders

cast aside a stone which to their mind is of indifferent value, but which is ultimately found to be the most beautiful, so the enemies of the psalmist, "the builders", scorned and maltreated him (see 13), but, as one who was righteous in the sight of God, he was raised to a position of high honour; and so, too, the nation, which had been overcome and despised by the Gentiles, but had been delivered by God, and was now honoured in their sight. In each case, *From Yahweh hath this come to pass, it is a wonder-work in our eyes*. The words have thus a kind of proverbial sense: the despised of many is become the honoured one. On the Messianic interpretation of this passage see Vol. I, p. 100 f.

In the Mishnah (*Sukhôth* iii. iv) much is said about the special importance of the first day of the feast when this fell on a Sabbath, which was, in any case, a day of rejoicing; there may, thus, well be a special significance in the words of 24: *This is the day Yahweh hath ordained* (cp., e.g., Exod. 16<sup>29</sup>), *let us be glad and rejoice in it*. Very impressive must have been the great shout raised by the whole body of the processionists: *Ah, Yahweh, save now* (*Hoshi'ah-na'*), on which see further above, *Ah Yahweh, grant prosperity*; in the Hebrew the interjection *Ah* is written 'Anna' with each vowel accented. When the shout of the multitude outside the temple gates had died down, a voice from within welcomed the worshippers in the words: *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh, we bless you from the house of Yahweh*, uttered by one of the Levitical choir. Thereupon the worshippers respond: *Yahweh is God, may he give us light* (cp. Num. 6<sup>25</sup>: "Yahweh make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee"). The worshippers now enter the temple, and the leader of the Levitical choir gives the command: *Marshal the procession with leafy-branches* (see text-critical note), *let it proceed unto the horns of the altar*. The rendering of the English version: "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar", is due to a misunderstanding of the Hebrew; to have done this would have been contrary to the ritual; and, in any case, it would hardly have been possible to bind the sacrificial victim to the "horns" of the altar, for these were quite small protuberances. The reference in this verse is to the solemn procession within the temple, described in the Mishnah (*Sukhôth* iv. 5-7), during which all the worshippers carried palm-branches (cp. Lev. 23<sup>40</sup>); whenever the shout of *Hoshi'ah-na'* was raised the palm-branches were waved to and fro. The mention of the altar is in reference to the ritual act of the worshippers who beat their palm-branches on the ground on each side of the altar (*Sukhôth* iv. 6).

The command for the procession to begin having been given, each of the worshippers utters the words: *My God art thou, I will thank*

*thee, my God, I will extol thee*, which he is now about to do, and then all present repeat the opening words of the psalm.

### *Religious Teaching*

The primary point of religious teaching offered by this psalm, apart from the detailed essence of religion running through the whole body of the superb composition, is the stress laid on the need of congregational worship. However devout, and earnest, and sincere the true believer may be in his silent and private intercourse with God, there is something lacking if the individual member does not realize that he is indissolubly joined to the body (cp. 1 Cor. 12<sup>12-27</sup>); and this, in the religious sense, cannot be fully experienced apart from joint-worship. This is the implication which the psalm, in the form in which we now have it, insists upon. To the Christian the inspiring sense of "altogetherness" in the sight of God is an assurance of the active fulfilling of the two great commandments (Mark 12<sup>29-31</sup>). The whole conception of the content of worship portrayed in this psalm is extraordinarily fine: praise, thanksgiving, supplication, acknowledgement of God's mercies, the expression of trust in him.

### PSALM 119

THIS is an acrostic psalm which differs from all others of the kind (viz., 9 and 10 as one, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 145) in that the opening letter of each of the eight lines of each section, respectively, is the same; in this way the whole Hebrew alphabet is worked through. It is largely due to this artificial construction that the composition abounds in repetitions which makes the reading of it somewhat monotonous. That the composer is greatly indebted to the writers of other psalms, as well as to the Wisdom writers, soon becomes evident.

The main purpose of the psalmist is the glorification of the Law, which is described in various ways: testimonies, statutes, precepts, commandments, judgements, word; this last is sometimes used in the sense of "promise"; two nouns occur for this, *dābār* and *'imrāh*, but they are often parallel to one another in this psalm, and are used of the divine utterance in the Law. The conception of the Law as here set forth is very striking, and demands a brief description. Its divine origin is, of course, fundamental; it is the embodiment of truth, is full of wonder-works, illumines the pathway of life, is the means of divine grace, gives peace, keeps from sin, gives life, counsel, and comfort, is the most beautiful of all possessions, more precious than

gold, and lasts to eternity. The psalmist never tires of expressing his delight in, and love for, the Law; in it he recognizes the will of God which he discerns at work everywhere.

While the expression of this deep and sincere devotion to the Law was the primary purpose for which the psalmist wrote, there is reason to believe that he had a subsidiary object in view in his glorification of it. There are a number of passages which witness to the existence of a difference of religious outlook; the forceful language which is sometimes used may be the echo of the bitterness of controversy with those of differing views, who, in the eyes of the psalmist, were sinners and enemies of the Law because they did not observe it in the strict way which he held to be right. In other words, the psalm seems to reflect the clash of views within Judaism. There is nothing to suggest that the writer had Gentiles in mind when speaking of his adversaries; indeed, the whole way in which their enmity and hatred are spoken of precludes this; they are Jews like the psalmist; and this psalm reflects the opposition between two religious attitudes among the Jews which in later days issued in the formation of parties. The beginnings date back to the time of the return from the Babylonian Exile; it was then that the stricter and more orthodox form of exilic Judaism, held by those who returned, was opposed to the laxer religious outlook and practice of those living in the homeland. Through the centuries the antagonisms, then formed, continued, and ultimately there arose the definitely constituted and opposed parties of the Sadducees and Pharisees. Our psalm reflects these conditions as they existed during about the middle of the third century B.C.; to this date we feel impelled to assign it, as against those who, on the one hand, favour the late Persian period, about a century earlier, and, on the other, those who bring the date down to Maccabæan times. As against the former, full time must be allowed for the great development of the Law as presented in our psalm; and, as against the latter, there is no indication in the psalm of the existence, as yet, of a definitely formed party, such as the *Hasidim*, the spiritual ancestors of the Pharisees, mentioned in 1 Macc. 2<sup>42</sup>, 7<sup>13</sup>, 2 Macc. 14<sup>6</sup>. Our psalmist glories in the Law in devout simplicity; he does not discuss its meanings and implications, after the manner of the Pharisees; the study of the Law had not yet reached that well-meaning, though often hair-splitting, method of interpretation which was characteristic of Pharisaism.

The metre is almost wholly 3 : 2, in only a few instances is there a change to other metres; this, however, was probably not due to the original writer.

## N

1. Blessed are the blameless in the way,
2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,

who walk in the law of Yahweh.  
that seek him with all their heart,

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 3. Who verily do no wrong,                          | who walk in his ways.                   |
| 4. Thou hast commanded thy precepts,                | to observe them diligently.             |
| 5. O that my ways were stedfast                     | in keeping thy statutes ;               |
| 6. Then should I not be ashamed in<br>contemplating | all thy commandments.                   |
| 7. I will thank thee in uprightness of<br>heart     | when I learn thy righteous judgements ; |
| 8. I will keep thy statutes ° to the full °,        | forsake me not.                         |

## Text-critical Notes

8. Place **לְמַעַן** here instead of at the end of the verse, as demanded both by the sense and the metre.

1-3. The psalm opens in the style of the Wisdom writers, insisting on the happiness of those who walk in innocency of life, who *are blameless in the way* (cp. Prov. 11<sup>20</sup>, 13<sup>6</sup>), as it is expressed, for this is to *walk in the law of Yahweh* (cp. Prov. 29<sup>18</sup>). A somewhat similar use of *way* occurs in Acts 9<sup>2</sup>. The Hebr. of 4 is difficult to translate without paraphrasing, viz. : “*Thou hast commanded that thy precepts should be observed diligently.*” In spite of every intention to do right, the psalmist recognizes his shortcomings, and bursts forth, *O that my ways were stedfast in keeping thy statutes* ; had that been the case he would have been spared the shame felt in *contemplating* God’s *commandments* which he had so often neglected. Nevertheless, he trusts that, with God’s help, he will *learn his righteous judgements*, and *thank him in uprightness of heart*, i.e., in heartfelt sincerity. Very touching is the resolution, *I will keep thy statutes to the full*, uttered with the sense of self-distrust and therefore accompanied by the prayer : *Forsake me not.*

## ב

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 9. Whereby shall a young man                       | keep pure his way ?                |
| ° By taking heed °                                 | ° to thy word °.                   |
| 10. With all my heart have I sought thee,          | let me not stray from thy command- |
|  | ments.                             |
| 11. In my heart have I laid up thy word,           | that I might not sin against thee. |
| 12. Blessed art thou, Yahweh,                      | O teach me thy statutes.           |
| 13. With my lips do I tell forth,                  | all the judgements of thy mouth.   |
| 14. In the way of thy testimonies do I<br>rejoice, | ° more than over ° all wealth.     |
| 15. On thy precepts will I meditate,               | and will contemplate thy ways ;    |
| 16. ° In thy law ° will I delight myself,          | I will not forget thy word.        |

## Text-critical Notes

9. For the construction see GK 1140. Read, with GS, **לְכִי**, omitting **בְּ**, “according to”. 14. Read, with S, **לְמַעַן** for **לְכִי**, “as over”. 16. Read **לְמַעַן** for **לְכִי**, “in thy statutes”, a form which does not occur in this psalm.

9. Fully in accordance with the Wisdom writers is both the form of question and answer, and the warning against the sin of impurity among young men (Prov. 7<sup>7</sup> ff., Eccles. 11<sup>9</sup>, 10, and cp. 2 Tim. 2<sup>22</sup>) ; the only safeguard is to take *heed* to the *word*, or command, of God. That the psalmist is innocent of sin here is because he has *sought* God, *with all his heart*, and *laid up* God’s *word* in his *heart*. For this he

blesses *Yahweh*, and protests his determination to be faithful to all the divine precepts, in which he rejoices more than in *all wealth*.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant that

I may live,

18. Unclose mine eyes that I may see

19. A stranger am I on earth,

20. My soul is overborne with longing

21. Thou rebukest the proud; accursed

22. ° Take away ° from me reproach °,

23. Even princes sat, talking together  
against me,

24. Yea, thy testimonies are my delight,

and I will observe thy word;

the wonder-works of thy law.

hide not from me ° thy word °.

for thy judgements at all times.

are they that wander from thy command-  
ments.

for ° thy testimonies ° have I kept,—

thy servant doth meditate in thy  
statutes,—

° thy statutes ° are my counsel.

### Text-critical Notes

19. Read *מִצְוֹתַי* for *מִצְוֹתֶיךָ*, "thy commandments", which occurs in v. 21; in v. 17 a different noun for "word" is used. 22. Read, with G, *לָקַח* for *לָקַח*, "he hath taken away". Om. with S, *וְלִבִּי*, "and contempt", which overloads the half-line. Read, either here or in v. 24, where the same word occurs, *מִצְוֹתֶיךָ*, "thy precepts". 24. Read *אֲנִשִּׁי* for *אֲנִשִּׁי*, "men of", which, applied to spiritual things, is inappropriate; the verse is a continuation of v. 22.

The ardent yearning to live in accordance with the divine ordinances in these verses is very edifying; the prayer is for divine grace that God's *word* may be observed, that the understanding may be quickened, so that the ethical beauty, the *wonder-works*, of his Law may be apprehended. Man's days on earth are but few; he is, as it were, merely a sojourner, a stranger, there; of all things that the psalmist desires, the revelation of God's word is foremost: *Hide not from me thy word*, which includes both command and promise. A strong expression is used to portray the intense yearning for the things of God, "my soul is overborne", lit. "crushed", with the weight of the longing. The arrogant, or proud, are rightly rebuked by God; in his horror for those who *wander* from the divine commandments, the psalmist pronounces them *accursed*. He is the victim of reproach on the part of *princes*, i.e., the highly-placed among his people; but God will answer his prayer and *take away from him* the undeserved insult, for, as God's *servant*, his thoughts are ever directed towards his *statutes*.

25. My soul cleaveth to the dust,

26. My ways I recounted, and thou didst  
answer me,

27. Make me to understand the way of  
thy precepts,

28. My soul weepeth for grief,

29. The way of lying put away from me,

30. The way of faithfulness have I chosen,

31. I cleave unto thy testimonies,

32. In the way of thy commandment I run,

quicken me according to thy word.

teach me thy statutes.

and I will meditate on thy wonder-  
works.

raise me up ° by ° thy word.

and be gracious unto me with thy law.

thy judgements ° do I desire °.

Yahweh, put me not to shame.

for thou enlargest my heart.

### Text-critical Notes

28. Read, with G, *כִּי* for *בְּ*, "according to". 30. Read *שְׁוִיָּתִי* for *אֲנִיָּתִי*, "I have set".

As elsewhere in this psalm, *soul* is used of the personal self. The psalmist recalls how in self-abasement he has lain prone on the ground in worship (cp. Job 16<sup>15-17</sup>): *My soul cleaveth to the dust*, but he knows that God will *quicken* him, i.e., inspire him with new life. He pours out to God the trials he has gone through, and prays for guidance by means of the divine *statutes*. He has wept for *grief*, *my soul weepeth*, lit. "melteth", because of his shortcomings, and he prays that God will *raise him up* by his *word*. He has not always been truthful, but prays that God will be *gracious* to him by imparting to him strength to fulfil his *law*. His whole bent is to be faithful to God, *the way of faithfulness have I chosen*; therefore *Yahweh* will not *put* him to *shame*. He runs in the *way* of God's *commandments*, because God has opened wide his heart to receive them: *for thou enlargest my heart*.

ה

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 33. Teach me ° the way of thy statutes,               | and I will keep it in gratitude ;         |
| 34. Give me understanding that I may<br>keep thy law, | yea, I will observe it with all my heart. |
| 35. Lead me in the path of thy command-<br>ments,     | for therein do I delight.                 |
| 36. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,            | and not to covetousness ;                 |
| 37. Turn mine eyes from beholding vanity,             | quicken me ° according to thy word °.     |
| 38. Confirm thy word unto thy servant,                | which is ° for them that fear thee °.     |
| 39. Turn away my reproach which I<br>dread,           | for thy judgements are good.              |
| 40. Behold, I long for thy precepts,                  | quicken me in thy righteousness.          |

#### Text-critical Notes

33. Om. יהוה, "Yahweh", for the metre's sake. 37. Read פִּדְּךָ, as in v. 25, for בִּדְּךָ, "in thy way". 38. Read לִינְתִּי for לִינְתִּי.

In this section, which consists of a number of petitions, there are only a few points which call for comment. The opening v. 33 is a little difficult on account of the word rendered *gratitude* ('ēqeb); it is a noun which is often used adverbially, "because of", "in consequence of", e.g., Ps. 40<sup>15</sup>, 70<sup>3</sup>; but here, as in Ps. 19<sup>11</sup>, Prov. 22<sup>4</sup>, it means lit. "gain", or "reward"; but it is uncertain whether the "reward" is intended to apply to God or to the psalmist; thus, paraphrased, the v. may be rendered: *Teach me the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it*, i.e., the way, in recognition of the answer to my prayer, i.e., his *gratitude* is something given to God in return. On the other hand, it may mean that the keeping of the way of God's statutes is a reward, or gain, to the psalmist. It is the former which we have adopted here, as the Godward thought is what is the more prominent throughout this psalm. 34 is, in some sense, a parallel to 33. In 36 the mention of covetousness on the part of the psalmist is unexpected; that the sin was prevalent is evident from Pss. 49<sup>6</sup>, 62<sup>10</sup>; that he confesses to it is all to his credit. 37 is presumably intended to be parallel to 36.



41. May thy lovingkindnesses come unto me, Yahweh,  
 42. That I may answer my slanderer by word,  
 43. Withdraw not from my mouth the word of truth °,  
 44. And I will observe thy law continually,  
 45. Yea, I will walk in freedom,  
 46. Yea, I will speak of thy testimonies  
 47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments  
 48. And I will lift up my hands ° unto thee °,
- thy salvation, according to thy word;  
 for I trust in thy word.  
 for I hope for thy judgements;  
 for ever and ever;  
 for thy precepts have I sought;  
 in the presence of kings, without fear;  
 which I love,  
 and will meditate in thy statutes.

## Text-critical Notes

43. Om. עַד-מֵאֵד, "utterly", which is inappropriate here, and overloads the half-line. 48. Read אֶל-מִצְוֹתַי for אֶל-מִצְוֹתַי, "unto thy commandments", and om. אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי, "which I have loved", repeated from the previous verse.

The chief import of this section concerns the resolutions made by the psalmist to walk in the ways of godliness. 43. *Withdraw not* is lit. "snatch not away", a somewhat unusual use of the word. Difficult to reproduce in English is 45, *Yea, I will walk in freedom*, the idea is the wide scope in which God's precepts will be observed, they will be the psalmist's guide in all circumstances (cp. Prov. 4<sup>12</sup>). In 46 *without fear* is lit. "and I shall not be ashamed."

49. Remember ° thy word ° to thy servant,  
 50. This is my comfort in mine affliction,  
 51. The arrogant have me greatly in derision,  
 52. I remember thy judgements of old,  
 53. Burning-wrath taketh hold of me because of the wicked,  
 54. Songs of praise have thy statutes been to me  
 55. In the night-time I remember thy name °,  
 56. This did I have, ° Yahweh °,
- for ° I wait ° for it.  
 that thy word hath quickened me.  
 from thy law I swerve not.  
 Yahweh, and take comfort.  
 who forsake thy law.  
 in the house of my sojourning.  
 and observe thy law.  
 for I keep thy precepts.

## Text-critical Notes

49. Read, with G, דְּבָרְךָ for דְּבָרְךָ, "a word". Read יִחְלִתֵּנִי for יִחְלִתֵּנִי, "thou hast made me to hope". 55. Om. יְהוָה, "Yahweh". 56. Add יְהוָה.

It will be noted how, again, stress is laid on the *word*, which embodies so much; here the thought is probably that of "promise", trust in which is *comfort in affliction*. However much the *arrogant* may deride the devout believer in God, the psalmist will *not swerve from observing the law* (cp. Ps. 44<sup>18</sup>). *Songs of praise have thy statutes been unto me*, (54), is to be taken in a literal sense; *the house of my sojourning* means, as in 19, the transient abode on earth (cp. Ps. 39<sup>12</sup>). *In the night-time I remember . . .*, (55), cp. Ps. 42<sup>8</sup>, 88<sup>1</sup>.

## H

57. My portion is Yahweh; I said,  
 58. I sought thy favour with all my heart,  
 59. I thought on ° thy ways °, and turned  
 60. I made haste, and I did not delay,  
 61. The cords of the wicked entangled me,  
 62. At midnight I rise to praise thee,  
 63. A companion am I to all that fear thee,  
 64. The earth is full of thy love, °
- I will keep ° thy word °;  
 be gracious unto me, according to thy word.  
 my feet unto thy testimonies.  
 to keep thy commandments.  
 thy law I did not forget.  
 because of thy righteous judgements.  
 and to them that keep thy precepts.  
 teach me thy statutes.

## Text-critical Notes

57. Read יְהוָה for דְּבָרַי, "thy words". 59. Read יְהוָה for דְּבָרַי, "my ways". 64. Om. יְהוָה, "Yahweh", for the metre's sake.

With *My portion is Yahweh*, (57), cp. Ps. 16<sup>5</sup>, 73<sup>26</sup>, 42<sup>5</sup>. The phrase *I sought thy favour* (59) is lit. "*I entreated thy face*", cp. Ps. 45<sup>12</sup>. The libellous behaviour of the wicked is metaphorically compared with a trap, *The cords of the wicked entangled me* (61); the only retort which the psalmist makes is that he observes the law, cp. 51.

## D

65. Well hast thou dealt with thy servant,  
 66. Teach me ° discretion and knowledge,  
 67. Before I was afflicted I was going  
     astray,  
 68. Good art thou, and doest good,  
 69. The arrogant have besmeared me with  
     lies,  
 70. Gross is their heart like fat,  
 71. Good for me that I was afflicted,  
 72. Better for me is the law of thy mouth
- Yahweh, according to thy word.  
 for I trust in thy commandments.  
 but now thy word I observe.  
 teach me thy statutes.  
 I keep thy precepts. °  
 I delight in thy law.  
 that I might learn thy statutes.  
 than thousands of gold and silver.

## Text-critical Notes

66. Om. טוֹב, "good", which is repeated from the previous verse, and overloads the half-line. 69. Om. בְּכָל-לֵב, "with all (my) heart", which overloads the half-line.

Most of this section repeats what has already been said. A curious, but expressive, metaphor is used in 69, *The arrogant have besmeared me with lies*; the thought is that falsehood has been imputed to him, lit. they have so plastered him with lies, that he is unrecognizable. His attitude, in face of this, is simply to *keep* the divine precepts. Another pointed metaphor is contained in 70, *Gross is their heart like fat*; the heart was regarded as the seat of understanding, and just as a "fatty degeneration" of the heart is fatal, so the beclouded understanding of man condemns him as useless. In face of this the psalmist has but one recourse, *I delight in thy law*. Twice in this section does the psalmist emphasize the remedial property of affliction; evidently he speaks from personal experience; and the spirit in which it is accepted is notable; his affection for all that appertains to God outweighs everything that the world can offer: *Better for me is the law*

of thy mouth than thousands (of pieces) of gold and silver, 72 (cp. Ps. 19<sup>10</sup>, Prov. 8<sup>10</sup>).

73. Thy hands have made me and established me, give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.  
 74. They that fear thee shall see me and be glad, for I have hoped in thy word.  
 75. I know <sup>o</sup> that thy judgements are righteous, and in faithfulness thou didst afflict me.  
 76. Let, now, thy love be my comfort, according to thy word to thy servant ;  
 77. Let thy mercies come unto me that I may live, for thy law is my delight.  
 78. Let the arrogant be ashamed, for they wrongfully oppress me, I meditate in thy precepts.  
 79. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, <sup>o</sup> and those that know <sup>o</sup> thy testimonies.  
 80. Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.

#### Text-critical Notes

75. Om. יהוה, "Yahweh", for the metre's sake. 79. Read, with the *Q<sup>re</sup>*, וַיֵּדְעוּ for the *K<sup>thibh</sup>* וַיֵּדְעוּ, "that they may know".

The psalmist emphasizes the truth that God has not only created him, but has also endowed him with the faculty to do what is right; he is *established*, lit. "prepared" for his walk in life; the psalmist, therefore, prays that he may use this faculty, *give me understanding that I may learn*, and thus fulfil, *thy commandments* (73). The result will be that those who *fear* God will *be glad*; the force of *word* here is "promise" (74); so, too, in 76. In 79 the psalmist prays that both those who *fear* God, and those who know his *testimonies*, may *turn unto him*, i.e., seek his companionship.

81. My soul pineth for thy salvation, for thy word do I hope.  
 82. Mine eyes pine for thy word <sup>o</sup>, when wilt thou comfort me ?  
 83. For I am like a wine-skin in smoke, I do not forget thy statutes ;  
 84. How many are the days of thy servant ? when wilt thou execute judgement on my persecutors ?  
 85. The arrogant have dug pits for me, they are not according to thy law ;  
 86. All thy commandments are truth, they persecute me without cause, help me ;  
 87. Well-nigh had they swept me <sup>o</sup> from the earth <sup>o</sup>, but I forsook not thy precepts.  
 88. According to thy love quicken me that I may observe the testimony of thy mouth.

#### Text-critical Notes

82. Om., with S, לֵאמֹר, "saying". 87. Read בְּאֶרֶץ for בְּמִדְבָּר, "in the earth".

The psalmist has more than once spoken of enemies by whom he is beset, but in this section they are more fully dealt with. The psalmist begins by expressing his deep yearning for divine help. He uses a strong word for describing his feelings, *my soul pineth*, lit. "is come to an end", or "done for"; *salvation* here means "help", and

*word* has again the force of "promise" (81), while in 82 it is a different word, meaning rather "utterance". At first, the words, *mine eyes pine for thy word*, sound strange; but that is only because of the pregnant mode of expression in the Hebrew; what they mean is that the psalmist is utterly weary in looking for the visible fulfilment of the divine *dictum* regarding the punishment of the wicked; *v.* 82 must be read in connexion with 84: *when wilt thou execute judgement on my persecutors?* A somewhat quaint, but very pointed, simile occurs in the words: *I am like a wine-skin in smoke* (83); what happens to a wine-skin in such a case is that it becomes shrivelled up if left too long; it was customary to hang wine-skins over the smoke of the fire in order to modify the strength of the wine. The psalmist finds himself in this plight owing to the evil machinations of his enemies, *who have dug pits for him*, a figurative expression for deceptive dealing, cp. Ps. 57<sup>6</sup>; they who act thus do what is against the law, *they are not according to thy law* (85); their doings *had well-nigh swept me*, lit. "consumed", their victim *from the earth* (87).

5

89. Thy word, Yahweh, is for ever,  
90. Thy faithfulness is to generation and generation,  
91. According to thine ordinances they stand ° unto ° this day,  
92. Unless thy law had been my delight,  
93. I will never forget thy precepts,  
94. I am thine, O save me,  
95. The wicked wait for me to destroy me,  
96. ° To all things ° an end I see °,

it standeth firm ° like the heavens °,  
thou hast established the earth, and it standeth;

for all ° serve thee °.  
I should have perished in mine affliction.  
for with them thou quickenest me.  
for thy precepts have I sought.  
I give heed to thy testimonies.  
thy commandment is exceeding broad.

#### Text-critical Notes

89. Read עַל־כָּל־יְמֵי for כָּל־יְמֵי, "in the heavens". 91. Add עַד, "unto". Read, with V, עַבְדֶּיךָ for עַבְדֶּיךָ, "thy servants". 96. Read לְכָל for לְכָל. Om. וְעַד, "end", a marginal explanatory note on the rare word תִּקְלֶה "end".

89-91 belong together in reference to the divine creative work; but otherwise the section is mainly a repetition of what has already been said. A new thought is contained in 96, where the transitoriness of all visible things is contrasted with the all-spreading power of the divine commandment.

6

97. How I love thy law!  
98. ° Thy commandment ° maketh me wiser than mine enemies,  
99. I have more understanding than all my teachers,  
100. I have more discernment than the aged,  
101. I keep back my feet from every evil path,  
102. From thy judgements I do not swerve,  
103. How sweet to my palate are ° thy words °,  
104. Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore

all day it is my meditation.  
for it is mine for ever.  
for thy testimonies are my meditation.  
for I have kept ° thy statutes °.  
that I may observe thy word.  
for thou teachest me.  
more than honey to my mouth;  
I hate every false way.

## Text-critical Notes

98. Read *מִצְוֹתָיִךְ* for *מִצְוֹתָיִךְ* (defectively written), "thy commandments".  
 100. Read *פְּקֻדֹתֶיךָ* for *פְּקֻדֹתֶיךָ*, "thy precepts". 103. *אִמְרָתֶיךָ* for *אִמְרָתֶיךָ*, "thy word".

The main point to be noticed in this section is the claim to superior wisdom on the part of the psalmist; this is especially significant in the words, *I have more discernment than the aged*, for this points to the rise of a somewhat altered conception of wisdom than that of an earlier generation. A comparison between the earlier and later books of the Wisdom literature shows that in the latter the religious element is distinctly more pronounced than in the former. In this section, therefore, we have a clear indication of the trend of the Wisdom writers towards a deeper religious insight in setting forth their ideas on Wisdom; indeed, the whole psalm bears witness to this.

105. A lamp ° to my feet ° is thy word, and a light to my path.  
 106. I have sworn, ° and I will keep it °, thy righteous judgements.  
     to observe quicken me, according to thy word.  
 107. I am greatly afflicted, Yahweh,  
 108. The offerings of my mouth accept, and teach me ° thy commandments °.  
     Yahweh, but thy law I forget not.  
 109. My life is continually in my hand, but I strayed not from thy precepts.  
 110. The wicked have laid for me a snare,  
 111. ° Mine inheritance ° are thy testi- for the joy of my heart are ° they °.  
     monies for ever,  
 112. I have inclined my heart to fulfil thy for ever and ever.  
     statutes,

## Text-critical Notes

105. Read, with GS, *לְרַגְלִי* for *לְרַגְלִי*, "my foot". 106. Read *אִמְרָתֶיךָ* for *אִמְרָתֶיךָ* "and I have kept". 108. Read *מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ* for *מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ* "thy judgements". 111. Read, with V, *נָחֵלְתִי* for *נָחֵלְתִי* "I have inherited". Read *הֵמָּנָה* for *הֵמָּנָה* "they" (masc.).

There is but little that calls for notice in this section. In 109, *My life is continually in my hand*, we have an expression which may well have been taken from such passages as Judg. 12<sup>3</sup>, 1 Sam. 19<sup>5</sup>, 28<sup>21</sup>, Job 13<sup>14</sup>; in all these it means to take a grave risk, and thus to endanger one's life. The psalmist does not explain in what way, and why, he is placed in this position; and the general context in which the statement stands gives the impression that it may be rhetorical, as in 87, 95.

113. I hate the double-minded, but thy law do I love.  
 114. My hiding-place and my shield art thou, I hope in thy word.  
 115. Depart from me, ye evil-doers, that I may keep the commandments of my God.

116. Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live,  
 117. Hold me up that I may be safe ° and delight myself °  
 118. Thou despisest all that err from thy statutes,  
 119. Dross ° dost thou account ° all the wicked on earth,  
 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee,
- and let me not be disappointed of my hope.  
 in thy statutes continually.  
 for false is ° their intention °.  
 therefore I love thy testimonies.  
 and I am afraid of thy judgements.

## Text-critical Notes

117. Read, with GS, וְאֶשְׁפָּעָה for וְאֶשְׁפָּחָה, "and I shall have respect".  
 118. Read, with the Versions, תִּרְמִיחֶם for תִּרְעִיחֶם, "their deceit". 119. Read חֲשַׁבְתָּ, cp. v. 59, for הֲשַׁבְתָּ, "thou causest to cease".

The mention of the *double-minded* (113), here only in this sense, is in reference to Hellenistic Jews; the word is possibly connected with that for "branch", cp. Isa. 27<sup>10</sup>, which is broken off from the tree; and thus, here, those upon whom the precepts of the Law sat lightly, and who were broken off from the body of the orthodox. They are again spoken of in 118, *false is their intention*, or perhaps better "their outlook"; the word is Aramaic, and gives better sense than that in the Hebrew text, "their deceit", which is obviously *false*.

## ע

121. I practise justice and righteousness,  
 122. Go surety for thy servant for good,  
 123. Mine eyes pine for thy salvation,  
 124. Deal with thy servant according to thy love,  
 125. Thy servant am I, give me understanding,  
 126. It is time for Yahweh to act,  
 127. ° Above all ° do I love thy commandments,  
 128. Therefore ° in thy precepts I walk rightly °,
- leave me not to mine oppressors.  
 let not the arrogant oppress me.  
 and for thy righteous word.  
 and teach me thy statutes.  
 that I may know thy testimonies.  
 they have broken thy Law.  
 more than gold and pure-gold.  
 Every false way I hate.

## Text-critical Notes

127. Read עַל-כֵּן for עַל-כֵּן, "therefore". 128. Read לְפָקֻדֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל for לְפָקֻדֶיךָ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, "all thy precepts of all I esteem right".

In 121 to *practise*, lit. "do", is the technical term for carrying out the ordinances of the Law, in post-exilic Judaism, cp. Isa. 56<sup>1</sup>. The Hellenistic Jews are again referred to, so much so that the intervention of God is called for: *It is time for Yahweh to act, they have broken thy law* (126).

## פ

129. Wonderful are thy testimonies, therefore  
 130. The revealing of thy words giveth light,  
 131. My mouth do I open, and pant,  
 132. Turn unto me, and be gracious unto me,  
 133. Make firm my footsteps in thy word,
- my soul doth keep them.  
 instructing the simple.  
 for I long for thy commandments.  
 as is due to them that love thy name.  
 and let no iniquity master me.

134. Redeem me from the oppression of  
man,  
135. Make thy face to shine upon thy  
servant,  
136. Mine eyes run down with streams of  
water,

that I may observe thy precepts.  
and teach me thy statutes.  
because they keep not thy law.

In 130, the Hebrew word for *revealing* is lit. an "opening", or "door"; the verse means that when the import of the divine words is apprehended the spirit is illuminated; even the *simple*, i.e., the unlearned, can receive instruction thereby, cp. Ps. 19<sup>7, 8</sup>. For the justification of the rendering *As is due to them that love thy name* (132), see, e.g., Deut. 18<sup>3</sup>: "And this shall be the priests' due from the people."

137. Righteous art thou, Yahweh,  
138. Thou hast commanded thy testi-  
monies in righteousness,  
139. My zeal hath o'erwhelmed me,  
140. Purified to the full is thy word,  
141. Insignificant am I and despised,  
142. Thy righteousness is rightness for  
ever,  
143. Trouble and anguish have come upon  
me,  
144. Righteous are thy testimonies for  
ever,

° and upright ° are thy judgements.  
and in very faithfulness.  
because mine adversaries forget thy  
words.  
and thy servant loveth it.  
I forget not thy precepts.  
and thy law is truth.  
thy commandments are my delight.  
give me understanding that I may live.

#### Text-critical Note

137. Read וְיִשְׁרָם for the sing. וְיִשְׁרָ.

As in some other passages, the rendering is offered with the purpose of giving the thought of the original rather than a literal translation, which might obscure what is really meant; thus, *my zeal hath o'erwhelmed me*, is lit. "my zeal hath made an end of me" (139); again, in 140, *purified to the full* is lit. "purified much"; and in 143, *trouble and anguish have come upon me*, is lit. "have found me".

145. I call with all my heart, answer me,  
146. I call upon thee, ° Yahweh °, save me,  
147. I forestall early-dawn, ° and ° cry,  
148. Mine eyes forestall the night-watches,  
149. Hear my voice according to thy love,  
150. They draw nigh ° that persecute me °  
wickedly,  
151. Nigh art thou, Yahweh,  
152. Of old have I known from thy  
testimonies

thy statutes do I observe.  
that I may keep ° thy precepts °.  
and hope for ° thy word °.  
that I may meditate on thy word.  
Yahweh, quicken me, according to thy  
justice.  
they are far from thy law.  
and all thy commandments are truth.  
that thou hast founded them for ever.

#### Text-critical Notes

145. Om. יְהוָה "Yahweh". 146. Add יְהוָה. Read פִּקְחֵיךָ for עֲדֹתֶיךָ.  
"thy testimonies". 147. Read ל for י. Read, with SV, לְבָרְךָ for לְבָרְכִי,  
"thy words". 150. Read, with G, רִדְפִי for רִדְפִי.

There is nothing in this section that calls for particular comment.

153. Look upon mine affliction, and deliver me,  
 154. Plead my cause, and redeem me,  
 155. Far is help from the wicked,  
 156. Great is thy mercy, Yahweh,  
 157. Many are my persecutors and mine adversaries,  
 158. I beheld the treacherous-dealers, and felt loathing,  
 159. See, how I love thy precepts,  
 160. The sum of thy word is truth,
- for I forget not thy law.  
 quicken me according to thy word.  
 for they seek not thy statutes.  
 quicken me according to thy judgements.  
 from thy testimonies have I not swerved.  
 men who keep not ° thy commandments °.  
 Yahweh, quicken me according to thy love.  
 and all thy righteous judgements are eternal.

## Text-critical Note

158. Read, with G, מִן־הַיְּדֵי־הַרְעִיִּים for מִן־הַיְּדֵי־הַרְעִיִּים, "thy word".

In the final verse of this section, *The sum of thy word is truth* (160), there is a little uncertainty as to the precise force of the sentence; the Hebrew word rendered *sum* (*rô's* lit. "head") has various meanings; here it can mean either that the chief, or most important, part of the word of God is its truth (this is the force of the word in Ps. 137<sup>6</sup>), or else that everything contained in the word of God is summed up in the word "truth" (for this sense see Ps. 139<sup>17</sup>); it is the latter which is probably intended here, as the parallel to "sum" in the other half-line, *all thy righteous judgements*, suggests.

161. Princes persecuted me without a cause;  
 162. I rejoice because of thy word,  
 163. Lying do I hate and abhor,  
 164. Seven times in the day do I praise thee,  
 165. Great peace have they that love thy law,  
 166. I hope for thy salvation, Yahweh,  
 167. My soul observeth thy testimonies,  
 168. I observe thy precepts and thy testimonies,
- my heart standeth-in-awe of thy words.  
 as one that findeth great spoil.  
 thy law do I love.  
 because of thy righteous judgements.  
 and they have no occasion-of-stumbling.  
 and thy commandments do I fulfil.  
 yea, I love them greatly.  
 for all my ways are before thee.

A somewhat inappropriate comparison, unusual in the psalmist, occurs in 162, *I rejoice because of thy word, as one that findeth great spoil*, the nature of spiritual joy being so different from satisfaction of material gain in war; but a similar comparison occurs in Isa. 9<sup>2</sup>. Some commentators, with justification, emend *as one that findeth* so as to read *as one that bringeth forth*, i.e., from the battle; it must be granted that *spoil* is not the kind of thing one "finds". It is doubtful whether *Seven times in the day do I praise thee* (164) is to be taken literally here; seven was often used as an indefinite number of times (cp. Ps. 12<sup>6</sup>, Job 5<sup>10</sup>, Matth. 12<sup>45</sup>, 18<sup>22</sup>); Ps. 55<sup>17</sup> suggests rather three times a day as the hours of prayer.



169. Let my cry come near before thee °, according to thy word give me understanding.  
 170. Let my supplication come before thee, according to thy word deliver me.  
 171. Let my lips pour forth praise, because thou teachest me thy statutes.  
 172. Let my tongue sing of thy word, for all thy commandments are righteousness.  
 173. Let thy hand be for helping me, for I have chosen thy precepts.  
 174. I long for thy help, Yahweh. and thy law is my delight.  
 175. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, and let thy judgements help me.  
 176. I have strayed °, seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.

*Text-critical Notes*

169. Om. יהוה "Yahweh", for the metre's sake. 176. Om. כְּשֶׁהָאֵלֶּיךָ, "like a lost sheep", probably a marginal note which has been inserted in the text.

There is nothing in this section which calls for special comment.

*Religious Teaching.*

The weariness, one might almost say the boredom, experienced in reading through this psalm is apt to cause the reader to overlook the intensely religious feeling which runs all through it. It is perfectly true that the main purpose of the psalmist is the glorification of the Law, and the setting forth of the joy that he, as a truly godly man, experiences in observing its precepts; but, as he constantly emphasizes, the Law is the expression of the divine will; it is not the Law, *per se*, that he loves, a well-meaning element often prominent in later Judaism; he loves the Law because it tells of God's will; and he loves it because he loves God first. Unless this fact is recognized all through, we shall neither do justice to the writer, nor apprehend the deeply religious character of the whole psalm. It is well, therefore, that we should draw out the psalmist's conception of his relationship to God; and if his words often echo those of other psalmists, that is not a question of mere imitation, but the appropriation of expressions of truth which tell of his own personal convictions and feelings. *With all my heart have I sought thee*, 10; *my portion is Yahweh*, 57; *I am thine, O save me*, 94; *Hear my voice according to thy love*, 149; and so again and again, words which tell of a close walk with God. Then, again, it must be noted how often he protests that, as already pointed out, his love for the Law is always the outcome of his love for God: *I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I love, and I will lift up my hands unto thee*, 47, 48; *Well hast thou dealt with thy servant, Yahweh, according to thy word*, 65; *They that fear thee shall see me and be glad, for I have hoped in thy word*, 74; *Let thy mercies come unto me that I may live, for thy law is my delight*, 77; *See how I love thy precepts, Yahweh, quicken me according to thy love*, 159; *Seven times in the day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgements*, 164. And many

other passages could be quoted showing this intimate connexion between the love of God and therefore the love of his Law. In spite, therefore, of the artificial character of the psalm in its external form, it pulsates with religious feeling from beginning to end.

### PSALM 120

THIS is the first of the group of fifteen psalms (120–134) which have the title *Shîr ha-ma'âlôth*, “Song of Ascents”. Four are ascribed to David (only two in the Septuagint), and one to Solomon; but these ascriptions are not to be taken seriously. Considerable differences of opinion are expressed as to the meaning of the title “Song of Ascents”. We may dismiss that which understands it to be in reference to the “step-like” repetition of certain words taken up in one verse from a preceding verse (*anadiplosis*)—e.g., “dwell” in 120<sup>5, 6</sup>, “slumber” in 121<sup>3, 4</sup>, “in vain” in 127<sup>1, 2</sup>, and others; for the same occurs in other psalms outside this group; moreover, it is doubtful whether such *anadiplosis* occurs in 126, 130–133. Equally unacceptable is the idea that the “Ascents” refer to the fifteen steps leading from the court of the women to that of the Israelites on which the Levites stood when singing; this is based on a passage in the Mishnah tractate *Middôth* 2<sup>5</sup>: “Fifteen steps led from it (*i.e.*, the court of the women, mentioned previously) to the court of the men (*i.e.*, the Israelites); they corresponded to the fifteen ‘step-songs’ in the *Psalms*; on these the Levites sang their song”. But this does not necessarily refer to the psalms under consideration; that the respective numbers corresponded was quite sufficient for the fact to be mentioned; but the “Levites’ song” does not by any means necessarily refer to these psalms; indeed, in his commentary on the *Psalms*, Kimchi, who mentions this theory, was himself in doubt as to its validity, for he goes on to say that the “Ascent refers perhaps to the ascending of the captives from Babylon”! The most probable explanation of the title is that it refers to the ascent of pilgrims up the hill of Zion, during which these psalms were sung, at the great festivals; this is borne out by some passages in the psalms themselves (e.g., 121<sup>1</sup>, 122<sup>1–4</sup>, 125<sup>1, 2</sup>, 132<sup>13, 14</sup>). On the other hand, it must be confessed that some of the psalms in the group are not in the nature of pilgrim-psalms (120, 124, 125, 130, 131). This may perhaps be accounted for on the supposition that they were incorporated, for one reason or another, in course of time, in a collection of rolls which contained originally only pilgrim-psalms.

As to the dates of the psalms in this group as we now have it, the

probability is that they are all post-exilic, though within this period the dates vary. At the same time, it may well be that some of them are *in origin* pre-exilic; for the command to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem occurs in Exod. 23<sup>10, 17</sup> (E), and 34<sup>23</sup> (J); they are also referred to in such passages as Isa. 2<sup>3</sup>, possibly, and 30<sup>29</sup>.

In the psalm with which we are now concerned (120) there is nothing to indicate its date. The metre is 3 : 2 with the exception of v. 5, which is 3 : 3.

### *A Song of Ascents.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. To Yahweh, when I am in trouble,          | I call °, and he answereth me °;        |
| 2. Yahweh, deliver my soul                   | from the lip of falsehood °.            |
| 3. ° What shall be given to thee °, ° yea,   |   |
| what added °;                                | O false tongue ?                        |
| 4. Arrows of a warrior, sharpened,           | with red-hot broom-wood.                |
| Woe is me! 5. That I sojourn in              |   |
| Meshech,                                     | that I dwell among the tents of Kedar ; |
| 6. Too long hath my soul dwelt               | with them ° that hate ° peace ;         |
| 7. I am for peace, but when I speak (of it), | they are for war.                       |

### *Text-critical Notes*

1. Read *וַיַּעֲנֵנִי* for *וַיַּעֲנֵנִי*, "and he answered me". 2. Om. *מִלִּשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה*, which breaks the rhythm; erroneously copied from the next verse. 3. Read, with G, *לָךְ וַיִּמְדֶּךָ* for *לָךְ וַיִּמְדֶּךָ*, "what shall he give to thee?"; "thee" being in reference to "tongue", should be fem. Read, with G, *וַיִּמְדֶּךָ*, omitting *לָךְ* (*lāk*), for *וַיִּמְדֶּךָ*, "yea, what shall he add unto thee?" 6. Read, with GS, *שׂוֹנֵא* for *שׂוֹנֵא* *sōnē*, "him that hateth"; cp. next verse.

1, 2. With his deep trust in *Yahweh*, the psalmist begins his plaint by recalling past experiences—viz., whenever he has found *trouble* at hand, he has called upon *Yahweh*, and the answer has come. This, therefore, he does now, and he prays that *Yahweh* will *deliver* his *soul* from the *lip of falsehood*. He is, thus, the victim of calumny.

3, 4. Just as he has suffered from the cruel libel of a *false tongue*, so, in like manner, he protests, shall retribution, sharp and burning, overtake his calumniator; according as he has done, so may it be done to him, cp. Ps. 7<sup>16</sup>, 28<sup>4</sup>, Jer. 50<sup>15 29</sup>. This is put in the rhetorical form of question and answer (cp. Hos. 9<sup>14</sup>): *What shall be given to thee?*—*i.e.*, by *Yahweh*; the words: *yea, what added?* are a curse or an oath formula (cp. 1 Sam. 3<sup>17</sup>, 1 Kgs. 2<sup>23</sup>, "God do so to me and more also", lit. "and thus may he add"; and often elsewhere). The answer is: *Arrows of a warrior, sharpened* (cp. Ps. 7<sup>13</sup>), meaning, not merely arrows as are used—*e.g.*, by a hunter—but such as a mighty man shoots in battle; and *red-hot broom-wood* (lit. "with coals of broom-plants"); the point here is that the wood of the broom (*genista*), being very hard, retains the glow, when kindled, longer than any other kind of wood; Burckhardt found the Bedouin of Sinai burning the roots of this bush into coal, and says that "they make the best charcoal, and

throw out the most intense heat" (Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, Vol. I, p. 345 [1881]). When this, therefore, is flung into a tent, or dwelling-place, it will soon set it ablaze. The words of this verse are to be understood figuratively, and this applies also to those which follow. 5, 6. Here the psalmist pictures his present abode as though in the midst of wild hordes of nomads, so inimical are his neighbours; *Woe is me*, he says, *that I sojourn in Meshech, That I dwell among the tents of Kedar*. A difficulty arises in connexion with the name of Meshech (the classical *Mosci*, the Accadian *Moshki*); it occurs elsewhere always together with Tubal (Gen. 10<sup>2</sup>, 1 Chron. 1<sup>5</sup>, Ezek. 27<sup>13</sup>, 32<sup>26</sup>, 38<sup>2, 3</sup>, 39<sup>1</sup>), whereas in Gen. 25<sup>13, 14</sup>, 1 Chron. 1<sup>29</sup> Kedar and Massa are mentioned together; the sons of Kedar dwelt in the Syrian desert (Jer. 49<sup>28</sup>), and Massa was the name of a North Arabian tribe; whereas Meshech was a district between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The contention of some commentators, therefore, that Massa should be read for *Meshech* has much in its favour. In Isa. 21<sup>17</sup> the sons of Kedar are spoken of as "archers and mighty men". 6, 7. Like these war-like dwellers of the desert, then, are those among whom the psalmist has *dwelt too long*, for they *hate peace*; lover of peace as he himself is, no sooner does he begin to speak than they declare themselves for *war*. Actual war used figuratively of the war of words occurs elsewhere in the psalms (e.g., 109<sup>2, 3</sup>).

### *Religious Teaching.*

Of this there is but little to be said. The spirit of *lex talionis* which pervades the psalm is not edifying; and the implied expectation that the injured one will receive divine support in taking vengeance on his enemy witnesses to an undeveloped conception of God. The psalm must be regarded as a lapse from the teaching of the Law—see, e.g., Lev. 19<sup>18</sup>. But even such a psalm as this has its uses, if only as showing how the spirit of revenge perverts true religion.

### PSALM 121

THIS beautiful little psalm is antiphonal in form; but it is by no means easy to decide which verses are to be assigned to the respective speakers or singers. The difficulty is increased by the fact that a copyist seems to have altered the pronouns in vv. 2, 3, having himself been uncertain as to how the verses were to be assigned. That there should be differences of opinion is natural enough. A further difficulty arises regarding the question as to who the speakers were. Three possibilities suggest themselves, each of which has much in its favour. It

is held that the psalm represents a kind of dialogue between a layman and a priest; and a certain didactic tone in the psalm supports this view. But if, as the title of the psalm indicates, and the opening words confirm: "I lift mine eyes to the hills",—if this was a pilgrim song, sung by a band of pilgrims ascending the hill of Zion, then some doubt is cast upon this view, because the priest would be in the temple, and not accompanying the band of pilgrims. A second view is that the psalmist is communing with himself, quickening his religious sense by asking himself questions and giving his own answers; that also is a beautiful idea, but it is open to the same objection as the foregoing. Holding, as we do, that this is a pilgrim psalm, it seems more natural to suppose that the psalm presents us with the picture of a body of pilgrims, one of whose number acted as leader; he began with *v.* 1, to which his fellow-pilgrims responded with *v.* 2; then, in *v.* 3, he uttered a wish, and in chorus the pilgrims reassured him, *v.* 4. The remainder of the psalm, *vv.* 5–8, is then again taken up by the whole band of pilgrims in chorus. That many of the psalms, especially such a short one as this, were known by heart through constant repetition, may be confidently assumed.

Like the other psalms in this group, this one is, no doubt, of post-exilic date, though no actual indication is given in the psalm itself.

The metre varies; in *vv.* 1, 2 it is 3 : 3, *vv.* 4, 5 are 2 : 2 : 2, and the remaining verses 3 : 2.

#### *A Song of Ascents.*

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. I lift up mine eyes to the hills !      | From whence cometh my help ?      |
| 2. " ° Thy help ° is from Yahweh,          | Maker of heaven and earth ! "     |
| 3. May he not suffer ° my foot ° to slip,  | may ° my Guardian ° not slumber ! |
| 4.   | " Behold, he slumbereth not,      |
|  | He sleepeth not,                  |
|  | The Guardian of Israel ! "        |
| 5.   | " Yahweh is thy Guardian,         |
|  | Yahweh is thy defence,            |
|  | At thy right-hand ;               |
| 6. That the sun may not smite thee by day, | nor the moon by night,            |
| 7. Yahweh doth shield thee from all harm,  | he guardeth thy soul ;            |
| 8. Yahweh doth guard thy going-out and     |                                   |
| coming-in,                                 | from now until evermore.          |

#### *Text-critical Notes*

*Title.* Read *הַמַּעֲלֹת* for *לִמְנוּחַ*. 2. Read *עֲזָרָה* for *עֲזָרִי*, "my help". 3. Read *רַגְלִי* for *רַגְלֶךָ*, "thy foot"; and *שֹׁמְרִי* for *שֹׁמְרֶךָ*, "thy Guardian".

1–2. One among the band of pilgrims ascending Mount Zion looks upwards and around *to the hills*, or mountains, round about Jerusalem, and triumphantly asks his fellow-pilgrims: *From whence cometh my help?* In his mind there is doubtless the thought expressed in Ps. 25<sup>2</sup>: "Jerusalem,—mountains are around her, and Yahweh is round about his people". Therefore the whole band of pilgrims make reply: *Thy help is from Yahweh*; adding the oft-repeated article of belief:

*Maker of heaven and earth*, cp. Ps. 115<sup>15</sup>, 124<sup>8</sup>, 134<sup>3</sup>, 146<sup>6</sup>. Then the first pilgrim again raises his voice in words which, in their Hebrew form, express conviction: *May he not suffer my foot to slip* (cp. Ps. 66<sup>9</sup>), *may my Guardian not slumber* (3); we have here the echo of an old-world idea of an anthropomorphic character, cp. 1 Kgs. 18<sup>27</sup>; but that it is only an echo, and not to be intended to be taken in a literal sense, is clear from what follows (4, 5), in which the band of pilgrims respond; Yahweh is not like the Baals, who might be thought of as slumbering. Certain as it is that his care is for his individual faithful ones who trust in him, yet more, he is *the Guardian of Israel* (cp. Deut. 32<sup>9</sup>). He is the Guardian of both nation and individual; so the singers continue: *Yahweh is thy Guardian and defence*, lit. "shade", or "shadow", cp. Ps. 91<sup>1</sup>. The nearness of Yahweh, often emphasized by the prophets (e.g., Isa. 50<sup>8</sup>, 55<sup>6</sup>), is graphically expressed: *at thy right hand*, lit. "upon the hand of thy right hand" (cp. Pss. 16<sup>8</sup>, 109<sup>31</sup>). Yahweh's protection is further described in 6, for, as the God of Nature, he will see to it that *the sun may not smite by day*, i.e., him who is under his care (cp. Ps. 91<sup>6</sup>, Isa. 49<sup>10</sup>), *nor the moon by night*; the belief in the harmfulness of the moon's rays was widespread in ancient times (cp. Matth. 4<sup>4</sup>, *σεληνιαζομένου*, 17<sup>15</sup>). Indeed, *Yahweh doth guard* from every kind of ill, whithersoever his faithful one may go; for the expression *thy going-out and coming-in*, cp. Deut. 28<sup>6</sup>, 31<sup>2</sup>, 1 Sam. 29<sup>6</sup>.

### *Religious Teaching*

The expression, simple yet deep, of trust in God's guidance through every walk in life is the keynote of this psalm; and it could hardly be set forth in greater beauty. The Creatorship of God, and His power over Nature—i.e., his illimitable greatness, are truths which might well induce the feeling that the individual, so utterly insignificant in the sight of God, is unworthy of his notice; it was one which many had experienced, and was pointedly rebuked by Ben-Sira: "Say not, I am hidden from God, and in the height who will remember me? . . . They that lack understanding think these things; and a man of folly thinketh thus" (Ecclus. 16<sup>17-23</sup>). In the same way, the psalmist, so far from thinking that he is beneath God's notice, emphasizes the guardianship and defence which he bestows on the individual,—“from now until evermore”.

### PSALM 122

IN this psalm the psalmist recalls his visit to Jerusalem on the occasion of one of the festivals. In the opening verse he tells of his delight on

hearing of the intention of a number of his fellow-citizens (the locality is not indicated) to make the pilgrimage. It was necessary for a number to join together for this purpose because the journey would be hazardous if undertaken by a single individual; the danger of robbers was ever present (cp. Luke 20<sup>30</sup>). Then, in the next verse, the psalmist pictures to himself how they had all stood together on entering the Holy City. The remainder of the psalm is a song of praise glorifying Jerusalem.

The date to be assigned to this psalm depends, to some extent, on the interpretation of *v.* 3, on which the notes must be consulted. That it belongs to a time after the Deuteronomic legislation is suggested by *v.* 4, which points to the centralization of worship in Jerusalem ("Thither the tribes go up"); this of itself would not necessarily indicate a post-exilic date; but *v.* 5, which looks back to the time when justice was administered by the king, points to a post-monarchical date.

The metre varies; but opinions differ here; we estimate it as follows: *vv.* 1, 8, 9 are 3 : 3; *vv.* 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 are 3 : 2; and *v.* 5 is 2 : 2 : 2.

*A Song of Ascents. ° David's °.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. I was glad ° when they said unto me ° :  | "We are going to the house of Yahweh ! |
| 2. Our feet stood                           | within thy gates, O Jerusalem.         |
| 3. Jerusalem,—built like a city             | ° that uniteth us ° together ;         |
| 4. ° Thither ° the tribes go up,            | the tribes of Yah,                     |
| A law for Israel, to give thanks            | to the name of Yahweh.                 |
| 5.  | For ° there ° were set up              |
|   | The seats of justice °                 |
|   | Of the house of David.                 |
| 6. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem,       | may they prosper that love thee ;      |
| 7. May peace be within thy ramparts,        | quietude within thy palaces.           |
| 8. For my brethren and companions' sake,    | I will say : " Peace be within thee."  |
| 9. For the sake of Yahweh's-house, our God, | I will pray for thy welfare.           |

*Text-critical Notes*

*Title:* om., with some G and V MSS, לדוד. 1. Read בְּיִמְיָהֶם for בְּאַמְרֵיהֶם. 3. Read, with Budde, cp. G, שָׁחַבְרָה לָהּ for שָׁחַבְרָה לְיָהוָה, "that is compacted with herself together". 4. Read שָׁמָּה for שָׁשָׁם. 5. Read שָׁם for שָׁמָּה. Om. בְּקִסְאוֹת, "seats", lit. "thrones".

1. As already pointed out, the psalmist recalls to mind how his friends had *said* to him that they were *going to the house of Yahweh*, to keep the feast. He *was glad* at this, because otherwise he would have been unable to go, on account of the perils to which he would be exposed in undertaking such a journey by himself. Incidentally, the verse shows that it was not always possible for men to observe the injunction of the Law : "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before Yahweh thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread (*Mazzôth*), and in the feast of weeks (*Shabu'ôth*), and in the feast of tabernacles (*Sukkhôth*); and they shall not appear

before Yahweh empty . . ." (Deut. 16<sup>16, 17</sup>, cp. Exod. 23<sup>17</sup>, 34<sup>23</sup>). The Passover feast coincided with that of Unleavened bread. This law seems to be referred to in v. 4, and the mention of *giving thanks to the name of Yahweh* may indicate which of the feasts was here in question; the feast of Tabernacles was specifically that of *giving thanks* for the whole produce of the year, and at the same time its observance was in the nature of a guarantee of a fruitful production of the soil in the coming year. If this surmise is correct, the prayer for peace and welfare in the concluding verses of the psalm gains in significance; for, apart from war, peace and prosperity depended, above all else, on a good harvest in an agricultural community.

2. It was for our psalmist a very precious reminiscence as he pictured to himself how he and his fellow-pilgrims had on earlier occasions *stood within the gates* of the holy city, *Jerusalem*. This centre of worship, where, according to the belief of the times, the presence of the Deity was pervasive in a special way, was held in reverence and affection by every God-fearing Jew; no wonder that our psalmist now sings in praise of the hallowed site, 3-5. He begins with the thought of the unity of Jerusalem; but here a difficulty arises as to the kind of unity that was in the writer's mind. At first sight, the most obvious reference would appear to be to the literal building of the city; for the word used (*bānāh*) very rarely occurs in the Old Testament in any other than a literal sense; but in a few passages it has a figurative meaning when used in connexion with a house (e.g., Prov. 14<sup>1</sup>, 24<sup>3</sup>, Ruth 4<sup>11</sup>); those passages in which it is connected with men (Job 22<sup>23</sup>, Jer. 12<sup>16</sup>, Mal. 3<sup>15</sup>) do not come into consideration here. It may be added that in post-Biblical usage the word is sometimes used figuratively. The majority of commentators take it in a literal sense, and refer it to the rebuilding of the city walls by Nehemiah (Neh. 2<sup>12 a</sup>); and consequently the psalm is dated soon after the time of Nehemiah. This literal interpretation, however, is not borne out by the context. First, we have in the words *that uniteth us together* a root (*ḥabar*, it is the same whichever reading be accepted) which is never used in reference to a building being joined together or compacted, but almost invariably of men uniting together. That this is the sense in which it is used here is suggested by the words which follow: *Thither the tribes go up*, the thought being that of the fellowship among all the tribes which centred in worship; hence they are called the *tribes of Yah* instead of the ordinary phrase "the tribes of Israel". The going-up together was the visible sign of unity. And the tribes went up in accordance with the *law*, lit. "testimony"; the purpose of going up was *to give thanks to the name of Yahweh*; here, though the Hebrew verb means also "to praise", its primary meaning is "to give thanks"; the significance of this in the present connexion has already been dealt with. The mention of the *law for Israel*—i.e.,



of the divine ordinances—reminds the psalmist also of the judgements put forth by the divine representative on earth, the king, in days gone by; here in Jerusalem *there were set up*, lit. “abode”, *the seats*, lit. “the thrones”, *of justice*, tribunals presided over by the king, to whom disputes and the like were brought to be adjudicated upon (cp. 1 Kgs. 3<sup>16-28</sup>). 6-8. Finally, the psalmist exhorts men to *pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, expressing the wish that all they who *love* her may *prosper*; we have in the Hebrew of these words one of the most striking illustrations of alliteration in the Old Testament: *šā’ālu šalôm Jerûšalâim, yišlāyu ’ohābāik*, “O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, may they prosper that love thee”. A beautiful expression of affection for the city of God. And then, in his concluding words, he addresses Jerusalem, as though personified; for her own sake, as well as for the sake of his own *brethren and companions*—another note of unity—his heart’s desire is that there may be *Peace within thee*. The welfare of the city is desired, above all things, on account of the presence within it of the *house of Yahweh, our God*; a contented people will, he feels sure, ascribe their welfare to the true source of it, and will therefore worship in the temple, the *house of Yahweh*, in the spirit of gratitude and love.

### Religious Teaching

The joy expressed in contemplating the assembling together for common worship sets forth an ideal which may not always be experienced in actual life; but that is because what is involved is not always adequately appreciated. And yet this is so fully and beautifully expressed in the *Te Deum*: the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, praise God; so that joint-worship is a literal anticipation of what belongs to our life hereafter; it is an illustration of the truth that “the kingdom of Heaven is within you”, whether we interpret this as of the kingdom of Heaven being in the midst of us, or, in our hearts. To be sure, this fullness of truth is not what the psalmist meant; but to us, to whom the complete revelation has been vouchsafed, joint worship is not to be thought of as restricted to the visible assembly of worshippers; and therefore the joy in Christian worship is prompted by the knowledge that those in the bliss of the fullness of life are joining in praise and prayer with us.

### PSALM 123

THE psalmist speaks here in the name of his people. It may be surmised that the band of pilgrims had come from some city of the Dis-

persion, where they were living amid Gentile surroundings, and were often victimized by the contemptuous attitude taken up towards them. That the Jews were often treated in this way by those among whom they had settled does not admit of doubt. A vivid illustration of this occurs in a treatise of Apollonius Molon, quoted by Josephus (*Contra Ap.* II, 148); though of later date than the time at which our psalm was composed (he lived about 100 B.C.), his words may well echo what had obtained in earlier days. Josephus, in reference to him, says that "he sometimes reviles us as atheists, and man-haters; sometimes he reproaches us with cowardice; at other times, on the contrary, he accuses us of temerity, and as being devoid of sense (*ἀπονοίαν*). He says also that we are the most untalented (*ἀφυστάτους*) among the barbarians, for which reason we are the only people who have contributed no improvement to human life (*μηδέν εἰς τὸν βίον εὖρημα*)."  
That something of this kind prompted the utterance of this psalmist is likely enough; so that his plaint, and appeal to God, are readily understood. The extreme brevity of the psalm does not detract from its poignancy.

The date is suggested by the subject-matter; the psalm belongs to a fairly late period of post-exilic times, when numbers of the Jews had settled down in different centres of the Dispersion.

The metre is uniformly 3 : 2 (2 : 2 in *v.* 2<sup>b</sup>).

#### *A Song of Ascents.*

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes,    | O thou that dwellest in the heavens; |
| 2. Behold, as the eyes of slaves        | toward the hand of their lord,       |
| As the eyes of a maid                   | toward the hand of her mistress,     |
| So are our eyes toward Yahweh, our      | until he have mercy on us.           |
| God,                                    |                                      |
| 3. Have mercy on us, Yahweh, have mercy | for ° we are sated with contempt;    |
| on us,                                  | with the mockery ° of the proud.     |
| 4. Greatly sated is our soul            |                                      |

#### *Text-critical Notes*

3. Om. *בב* "exceedingly", it overloads the half-line. 4. Om. *הַשְׁמַנִּים הַבְּנוֹי*, "they that are at ease, the contempt", probably a marg. gloss, it overloads the half-line; the Hebr. text as it stands is ungrammatical. Read, following the *K<sup>t</sup>hibh*, *לְגַאֲיוֹנִים* for *לְגַאֲיוֹנִים* = *לְגַאֲיוֹנִים*, "of the proud ones among the oppressors".

1. In words expressive of the deepest feelings of comfort and reliance does the psalmist, oppressed by the contemptuous treatment to which he and his fellow-pilgrims have been subjected, *lift up* his eyes (cp. Ps. 121<sup>1</sup>) as he ascends Mount Zion, and addresses himself to him who *dwells in the heavens* (cp. Ps. 2<sup>4</sup>, 115<sup>3</sup>). We may here picture to ourselves a band of pilgrims who have undertaken a long journey from some uncongenial surroundings in order to join in a festal celebration at the religious centre of the nation. 2. As the eyes of their leader soar upwards to the sphere where he conceives that the Almighty dwells,

the thought arises in his mind that just as he is doing to his God, on behalf of those who are following him, so are *the eyes of slaves* riveted on *the hand of their lord*, and *the eyes of a maid* on that of *her mistress*. The Hebrew idiom permits of the omission of the verb "look", or the like, for which reason we have not thought it necessary to insert it in the translation given above. The mention of the *hand* is not without significance; as the instrument whereby a gift is conveyed, it is on the *hand* that the slaves gaze in the hope of receiving something. The comparison is the psalmist's way of expressing his sense of unworthiness in the sight of God. Slaves were regarded as inferior beings, and among the Gentiles, from whose midst the pilgrim-psalmist had come, there did not exist the consideration to which they were entitled by the Jewish legislation (cp., e.g., Exod. 21<sup>20-32</sup>, Deut. 21<sup>10-14</sup>, and especially Lev. 25<sup>35-46</sup>). 3, 4. Thus, speaking on behalf of his fellow-pilgrims, he looks with appealing eyes towards *Yahweh*, their *God*, until his *mercy* is accorded. How this is to be manifested in these particular circumstances the psalmist does not presume to indicate; that will be as God wills. The reiterated words *Have mercy on us* express the measure of their need; for they are shocked, filled with repugnance, *sated*, with the treatment to which they had been subjected by the mocking behaviour of the overbearing tyrants among whom their lot was cast.

### *Religious Teaching*

Extremely short as this psalm is, it suggests two matters touching practical religion which are of weighty import; though not expressed in words, they are none the less impressive. The first is the wholly beautiful spirit which seeks refuge from the aggravation caused by contact with disagreeable fellow-creatures in an appeal to the Almighty, with whom lies the power to effect a change of heart in the most obstinate. And the second is the entire absence of any sign of retaliation for the injury done; this is in striking contrast to the bitterly revengeful spirit so often evinced in other psalms (e.g., 109<sup>6</sup>, 120<sup>3, 4</sup>). The psalm witnesses to what was best in the Jewish religion. But, further, it may be said that this psalm illustrates the effect that social humiliation and oppression may have on the way of envisaging the relation to God, and the conception of God. Those people who feel that they are slaves prefer to think themselves as the slaves of God, and the feeling of their absolute dependence on his favour is deepened by the hopelessness of their present situation. Religion plays an important *rôle* here in preserving the spirit of men from falling into servile attitudes to those who have a present advantage over them. One can humble oneself before God without losing one's self-respect; but one cannot do so before human pride and power.

## PSALM 124

THIS is not a pilgrim-psalm, in spite of the title. The words in the opening verse, "Let Israel say", point to its being a liturgical psalm sung by the body of the worshippers in the temple. A priest, it may be surmised, sang the words: "If Yahweh had not been for us" (Let Israel say), and they were then taken up by the whole congregation as the key-note of the psalm which followed. The psalm is an expression of grateful recognition of divine help at a time of critical peril. That some definite occurrence is referred to, rather than that it records a general thanksgiving for past deliverances, as, *e.g.*, in Ps. 129, seems certain by the vivid and circumstantial way in which the danger is described. But the psalm gives no indication as to what particular event is referred to.

There are several linguistic usages which mark the psalm as of late post-exilic date.

The metre is somewhat irregular. Many commentators suggest a few textual emendations; but we fail to see the need of these.

*A Song of Ascents. ° David's °.*

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. "If Yahweh had not been for us,"   | Let Israel say:  |
| 2. If Yahweh had not been for us,     | when men rose up against us,   |
| 3. Then had they swallowed us alive   | when their wrath was kindled against us;                                     |
| 4. Then had the waters swept us away, | the torrent had gone over our soul;  |
| 5. Then had it gone over our soul,—   | the raging waters.   |
| 6.                                    | Blessed be Yahweh,<br>Who hath not delivered us<br>As a prey to their teeth, |
| 7. Our soul did escape like a bird    | from the snare of the fowlers,   |
|                                       | The snare is broken,<br>And we have escaped.                                 |
| 8. Our help is in the name of Yahweh, | Maker of heaven and earth.   |

*Text-critical Note*

Apart from the title, where לַיהוָה, "David's", is omitted by some MSS and by GV, no textual notes are necessary.

1, 2. The repetition of the words in these two verses has already been accounted for. *If Yahweh had not been for us*—*i.e.*, on our side, rendered lit. is: "If it had not been Yahweh who was for us"; our rendering is offered in order to retain the metre of the Hebrew. This recognition of divine help in the case of enemy onslaughts finds frequent utterance (*e.g.*, Ps. 56<sup>9</sup>, 118<sup>10-12</sup>); similarly, when the enemy had been victorious, it was ascribed to the withholding of divine help (*e.g.*, Ps. 44<sup>9-14</sup>, 74<sup>10, 11</sup>, 108<sup>11-13</sup>). This echoes the prophetic teaching on Yahweh as the God of History. The indefinite reference here, *when men rose up against us*, makes it impossible to form any idea of what occurrence was in the mind of the psalmist; but it is clear that

it was both critical and recent. The metaphors used in describing the enemy witness to one who was cruel, powerful, and crafty. He is compared with a cruel monster which *swallows up* his victim *alive* when his *wrath* is *kindled* by resistance (3). Then, further (in 4-6), he is compared with the torrent, the *waters* of which sweep away everything before it; *the raging waters*, they are called because the noise and foaming overflow recall the insensate rage of men. Here, again, as so often, the word *soul* is used of the individual person. At this point the psalmist is constrained to express his gratitude to God who had *delivered* his people from becoming a *prey to their teeth*; he reverts to his first comparison of the enemy being like a ravenous monster. We must guard ourselves here against being hypercritical. The psalmist speaks of the monster's *teeth*; previously he had said that it would have *swallowed us alive*; trivial incompatibilities of this kind must not be pressed, for the ancient Hebrew writers were not tied to logical niceties such as modern usage demands. A third comparison is that which speaks of the enemy as *fowlers* (7); the thought seems to have been taken from Ps. 91<sup>3</sup>, cp. also Prov. 6<sup>5</sup>, Hos. 7<sup>12</sup>, Am. 3<sup>5</sup>. When it is said that the *snare is broken* the reference is to the woodwork to which the net was fastened. A final acknowledgement of the divine help, which made escape from the enemy possible, appropriately closes the psalm (8). The contention that this is a later addition seems uncalled for; an expression of thankfulness or praise occurs very often in the concluding verse of a psalm, e.g., 35<sup>28</sup>, 45<sup>17</sup>, 46<sup>11</sup>, 57<sup>11</sup>, and elsewhere. *Our help is in the name of Yahweh* means that help is accorded by calling upon the name of Yahweh; as *Maker of heaven and earth* (cp. Ps. 115<sup>15</sup>, 121<sup>2</sup>), his power is illimitable.

### *Religious Teaching*

The central point here, whole-hearted recognition of the true source of help in trouble, has already been emphasized in the preceding notes.

### PSALM 125

THE purpose of this psalm is to contrast the indestructible security of those who trust in Yahweh with those who are unfaithful to him. Difficulties arise in seeking to ascertain to whom "the sceptre of the wicked" refers, and who are meant by those "who turn aside on their crooked ways". There are, however, good grounds for believing that we have here an allusion to the conditions as these existed during the first visit of Nehemiah to Jerusalem; this took place in 444 B.C.,

and lasted till 432 B.C. (Neh. 13<sup>6</sup>), when he returned to the Persian Court. Palestine was at this time under Persian suzerainty; it is to this that the psalmist refers in speaking of "the sceptre of the wicked", and it is possible that he was thinking more particularly of Sanballat and his friends. The antagonism between the orthodox Jews who had returned from the Exile, and "the people of the land", supported by the Samaritans, is well known from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The orthodox are, of course, those spoken of by the psalmist as "the righteous", while their opponents are, appropriately enough, described as "they who turn aside on their crooked ways"; for they professed to worship Yahweh (cp. Ezra 4<sup>2</sup>), but consorted with the Gentiles, and perhaps joined in their worship; in any case, they were not loyal to the Law (cp., e.g., Neh. 5<sup>9</sup>). Therefore, as the psalmist says, Yahweh will abandon them with "the workers of iniquity"—i.e., the Samaritans.

Our psalm cannot, then, be regarded as a pilgrim-psalm; the reason of its inclusion in the group may well have been the reference to mount Zion in the opening verse.

The metre is again somewhat irregular.

#### *A Song of Ascents.*

1. They that trust in Yahweh are like mount Zion,  
It shall not be moved, it abideth for ever.
2. Jerusalem! the hills are around her, and Yahweh is around his people.<sup>o</sup>
3. For the sceptre of ° the wicked °  
shall not rest  
on the lot of the righteous,  
That the righteous put not forth their hand to iniquity.
4. Do good, Yahweh, to the good and to the upright in heart;
5. But them who turn aside on their ° he ° will abandon ° with the workers  
crooked ways of iniquity °.

#### *Text-critical Notes*

2. Om. מִעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם, "from henceforth and for evermore", a later addition which interferes with the rhythm. 3. Read, with GS, הָרָשָׁע for הָרָשָׁע, "wickedness". 5. Om. יְיָהוָה, "Yahweh", which overloads the half-line. Read יוֹלִיךָ for וְיִלְכֶם, "he will abandon them", lit. "he will cause them to go". Om. שָׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, "peace upon Israel", a later addition.

1. The striking picture that *they that trust in Yahweh are like mount Zion*, for they are upheld unshakeably by him, is probably based on the last clauses of Isa. 28<sup>16</sup>, "he that believeth shall not be moved" (reading *yāmuš* for the meaningless *yāḥiṣ* "shall not make haste"). The comparison is further developed in the next verse (2), where *the hills around Jerusalem* are compared with Yahweh's care which surrounds his people; this picture is the more pointed in that the hills around Jerusalem are higher than that on which the city stands, so that they appear as a protecting bulwark. It is because of

the care which Yahweh has for his people that the psalmist is convinced that the present usurpation of the enemy will not last. The *sceptre*, often used metaphorically for "rule" (e.g., Gen. 49<sup>10</sup>), refers to Persian overlordship; but *the wicked* (it is in the singular, "the wicked one") must refer to an individual. We have adopted the reading of the Versions, "the sceptre of the wicked one", in preference to that of the Hebrew, "the sceptre of wickedness", because this latter is an otherwise unknown expression. We have given grounds, in the introductory section, for believing that the psalm reflects the conditions of the time of Nehemiah; if this is correct, the mention of "the wicked one" is significant; it cannot refer to Artaxerxes I, who was very friendly disposed to the Jews, and showed much kindness to Nehemiah; but it may well refer to Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, who showed himself the enemy of Nehemiah, and sought to lord it over the southern province; he was "grieved exceedingly" on hearing that "there was come a man (i.e., Nehemiah) to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh. 2<sup>10</sup>); his enmity against Nehemiah, and general attitude towards the followers of Nehemiah, may well have marked him out as "the wicked one" *par excellence* (cp. Neh. 4<sup>8</sup>, 6<sup>2</sup>, 14). When, further, the psalmist says that the sceptre of this wicked one *shall not rest on the lot of the righteous*, we recall the words of Nehemiah to Sanballat and his followers: "Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (2<sup>20</sup>). During Nehemiah's governorship, again, there was the constant danger of his own people, through their contact with the Samaritans and "the people of the land," being seduced into evil ways; Nehemiah says to them, e.g., in Neh. 5<sup>9</sup>: "The thing that ye do is not good; ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" In the light of this there is much significance in the psalmist's words: *In order that the righteous, i.e., the orthodox Jews, put not forth their hand to iniquity*. It is on behalf of the righteous, the faithful followers of Nehemiah, that the psalmist prays: *Do good, Yahweh, to the good*, the rendering represents the Hebrew literally, *and to the upright in heart* (cp. Ps. 7<sup>10</sup>). 5. In contrast to these are those *who turn aside on their crooked ways*; the form of the adjective is intensive, it is used in Judg. 5<sup>6</sup> of byways which turn off from the main road; in its figurative sense here, it refers to the turning away from the straight path of the Law of Yahweh into byways of heathen observances. The reference is evidently to those who had at one time walked in the straight path, and who had, therefore, been able to look for Yahweh's care and protection; and this would apply to "the people of the land"—i.e., those who had been left in the land of Judah in 586 B.C., and their descendants. Through their contact with *the workers of iniquity*—i.e., the Samaritans and the Gentiles—

they had become unfaithful to Yahweh, who therefore *abandons* them to go their own way.

### *Religious Teaching*

Two points call for brief notice here. The first, which appears in most of the psalms, is the indestructible faith in Yahweh in the face of adverse conditions. Belief and trust in God when things go well offer no difficulties; it is when the believer in an omnipotent, all-good God, suffers misfortune, or has become the victim of the evil-disposed, that problems arise, and faith is tried. Our psalmist found the solution in the conviction that the adverse conditions would pass, and that the evil-disposed would get their deserts. So far as it goes this may offer some consolation; but it is no real solution of the problem, which, as is well-known, exercised the minds of many devout Jewish thinkers. The solution lies elsewhere; but obviously this cannot be dealt with here; this is not a treatise on Apologetics. It must suffice to say that the whole question turns on the fact that the gift of human free-will has been granted to men by God; the way of exercising his free-will is man's business.

The second point is the danger of consorting with the wicked; in regard to this it will be enough to say: "They that touch pitch will be defiled."

### PSALM 126

THIS psalm is usually interpreted as in reference to the Return from the Babylonian Exile; but if so interpreted, we are faced with two difficulties. The first is that the psalm directly contradicts the actual facts. It describes the time after the Return as one of unalloyed gladness and delight; laughter and shouts of joy are universal; so great is the happiness of all that it seems like a dream to the returned exiles. When we turn, however, to the Biblical historical records, it is seen that the conditions were very different; what are the facts? Bad harvests; want of food, drink, and clothing; no payment for work; drought, blasting, mildew, and hail; corn, wine, oil, all are wanting; and the cattle are perishing (Hag. 1<sup>6</sup>, 11, 16, 17, 19); in consequence, general discontent (Zech. 7<sup>11-14</sup>); so that it took nearly twenty years before the people could be persuaded to finish the rebuilding of the temple; even in the year 520 B.C. "it was not yet completed" (Ezra 5<sup>16</sup>), the Return having taken place in 537 B.C.; this lack of interest in the requirements for worship is ominously significant; religion was at a low ebb. Then came the difficult times during the governorship of Nehemiah: Jerusalem still lying waste



(Neh. 2<sup>17</sup>); external troubles (Neh. 2<sup>19</sup>, 4<sup>1-3</sup>, 7, 8, 3<sup>33-35</sup>, 4<sup>1, 2</sup>); further discontent among the people (Neh. 5<sup>1a</sup>); non-observance of the Law (Neh. 13<sup>15-18</sup>, Ezra 10<sup>10, 11</sup>). It is thus inconceivable that the psalmist can have been thinking of the time after the Return from the Exile.

The second difficulty is this: if *vv.* 1-3 refer to the happy state of the people on their return from the Exile, they are directly contradicted by what is said in *vv.* 4-6, which represent the people as in a sorrowful condition, but as encouraged by the prophecy of a happy time to come.

The fact is that this psalm must be interpreted in precisely the same way as Ps. 85. Evil times have fallen upon the people, but the psalmist seeks to raise their spirits by prophesying the near approach of the restoration of all things, the return of the "Golden Age", so often foretold by the prophets (see further, Vol. I, p. 92).

As to the date of the psalm, the same applies as to what has been said in reference to that of Ps. 85.

The metre is mostly 2 : 2 : 2, while 3 : 2 occurs in *vv.* 4, 6, and 2 : 2 in *v.* 5.

*A Song of Ascents.*

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. When Yahweh bringeth back               | the ° restoration ° of Zion    |
| we shall be as those who dream ;           |                                |
| 2. Then shall be filled our mouth with     |                                |
| laughter,                                  | and our tongue with shouting ; |
| Then will they say ° : " Yahweh hath       |                                |
| done                                       | great things for them."        |
| 3. Yahweh hath done great things for us,   | we are joyful.                 |
| 4. Bring back, Yahweh, ° our restoration ° | as streams in the Negeb.       |
| 5. They that sow with tears                | shall reap with shouting ;     |
| 6. He that goeth weeping,                  | bearing his seed-sack,         |
| Shall surely come with shouting,           | bearing his sheaves.           |

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Read שְׁבוּת (*šebûth*) for שִׁבַּת (*šibath*, an error for שְׁבִית *šebîth*, "captivity"). 2. Om. בְּגוֹיִם (*baggôim*, "among the nations"), a marginal gloss which breaks the rhythm. 4. Read שְׁבוּתֵּנוּ (*šebûthênû*) for שְׁבִיתֵּנוּ (*šebîthênû*, "our captivity").

1-3. We have here the thought of the bringing back of the "Golden Age", which, as already pointed out, was a frequent theme of the prophets. For the expression *restoration*, or "Bringing back", see the notes on Ps. 85. The conditions brought about by the return of the happy time as at the beginning of all things are envisaged as so blissful that they will seem like a dream; if, however, the psalmist is here influenced by the prophet Joel—or both may be indebted to some earlier source—then we must understand *dream*, not as in its ordinary sense, but in that as used in Joel 2<sup>28, 29</sup> (3<sup>1, 2</sup>), where it stands as a parallel to the outpouring of the divine spirit—i.e., spiritual discernment; the whole context there deals with the "restoration". In describing the joyful experiences in that happy time, the psalmist

uses expressions which sound a little incongruous to our ears, the mouth being *filled with laughter, and the tongue with shouting* (cp. Job 8<sup>21</sup>); but it must be remembered that the Western ideal of seemingly self-control in all circumstances is not shared by Orientals, who surrender themselves to unrestrained and boisterous manifestations of delight which to them seem fitting. It was an element in the prophetic vision of the coming age of bliss that the Gentiles would be brought to acknowledge Yahweh (see, e.g., Isa. 11<sup>9, 10</sup>, 60<sup>1-3, 14</sup>, Jer. 16<sup>19</sup>); to this the psalmist refers in making the Gentiles say: *Yahweh hath done great things for them*—i.e., for Israel; the Hebrew text has: *Then will the Gentiles say*, but there is no need to express the word "Gentiles", because this is self-understood, and its insertion interferes with the rhythmic beats. The *great things* refer to the prosperity enjoyed by the Jewish people and their supremacy among the nations, which were among the characteristics of the happy time to come. To emphasize this, the words of the Gentiles are put into the mouth of the people of Yahweh, and thus repeated; these great things, with every reason, cause the people to be *joyful*.

The first part of the psalm was written for the purpose of giving comfort and hope to the people living in adverse circumstances. In the second part, 4-6, the present condition of the people is indirectly indicated, but it is overborne by words of triumphant trust; this spirit of optimistic assurance is one of the most admirable *traits* among the many beautiful expressions of faith which abound in the Psalter. The psalmist begins with a petition, couched in the form of prophetic terminology, that *Yahweh may bring back* the time of primeval happiness, *our restoration*, as we have, though inadequately, expressed it; *as the streams in the Negeb* is a comparison the force of which it is at first not easy to grasp. The *Negeb*, a proper name, meant the whole district in the south of Palestine which led into the desert proper; this was called the *Negeb* (from the root meaning "to be dry") because, but for a few spots here and there, it was arid land. The stream-beds were, therefore, for the most part dry; but in the rainy season the streams bubbled forth with overflowing water. The poetical psalmist, then, compares the present untoward condition of the people with the period of the arid, waterless *Negeb* during the summer months, and offers the prayer that this condition may be changed and give place to happy times, just as the dried-up watercourses in due time become running streams. Then, almost in the style of the *hakam* ("wise-man"), he utters a proverb of comforting import: *They that sow with tears shall reap with shouting* (cp. Jer. 31<sup>9</sup>); the picture, continued in the next verse, is that of the sower laboriously trudging over the uneven ground with his leather seed-sack (for this meaning of the Hebrew word see Köhler, in *ZAW* for 1937, pp. 161 f.); but

it is certain that in due season he will *come with shouting, bearing his sheaves*, the rich product of the insignificant seeds.

### *Religious Teaching*

See under Ps. 85.

## PSALM 127

THIS psalm consists of two independent fragments (*vv.* 1, 2 and 3-5) belonging to the Wisdom literature; it contains several points of contact with *Proverbs*. Hence the ascription to Solomon in the title, added later. The psalm is in no sense a pilgrim-psalm; the reason why it was included in the group was doubtless owing to the opening words, which were taken to refer to Yahweh's house—*i.e.*, the temple.

The two fragments are, however, appropriately placed together, since they deal, respectively, with building in a literal and in a metaphorical sense: the building of a house, and the building-up of a family. In each case, the sage insists, the safety and prosperity of the building can be ascribed only to Yahweh, and to him alone; he is the Master-builder.

The final clause of the first fragment presents us with a point of exegesis of great difficulty; owing to the unsatisfying way in which it is dealt with in the commentaries, we have permitted ourselves a somewhat drastic emendation of the text (see the exegetical notes on *v.* 2).

The fragments belong to the time when the teaching of Wisdom had developed, among the Hebrews, into a literature in the strict sense—*i.e.*, they are post-exilic; but their content is otherwise too indefinite to permit assigning to them a more definite date.

The metre in the first fragment is almost uniformly 3:3; in the second fragment almost uniformly 3:2.

### *A Song of Ascents. ° Solomon's °.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. If Yahweh doth not build the house,      | they labour in vain that build it.     |
| If Yahweh doth not guard the city,          | the watchman watcheth in vain.         |
| 2. ° If Yahweh doth not grant prosperity, ° | in vain do ye rise up early,           |
| Taking rest so late,                        | eating the bread of toil.              |
| 3. Behold, sons are the heritage of Yahweh, | ° his gift ° is the fruit of the womb; |
| 4. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,    | so are the sons of youth;              |
| 5. Happy ° is he ° that filleth             | his quiver with them,                  |
| ° He shall not be ashamed ° when ° he       |  |
| speaketh °                                  | with his enemies in the gate.          |

### *Text-critical Notes*

*Title*: omitted in G, see further p. 500. 2. Read אִם יִהְיֶה לְאִיְמָן יִשְׁעוֹ "so he giveth his beloved sleep", transposing the clause to the beginning of the verse 3. Read שָׂכָר for שְׂכָרָה, "gift", lit. "reward". 5. Om. הַזֶּקֶן, "the man". Read, with G, יִבְשׁוּ for יִבְשׁוּ "they shall (not) be ashamed". Read יִדְבְּרוּ for יִדְבְּרוּ, "they will speak".

1. In contrast to the belief of the times (it applies also to modern times, see Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, p. 136 [1888]), that unless the *daimon* (*jinn*) of the land was propitiated whenever a house was built, or even a tent erected, evil results would ensue, the Sage here teaches that unless it is in accordance with Yahweh's will and with his help that the house is built, the *labour* of those who *build* it is *in vain*; meaning either that the builders will be unable to complete their work, or that the building will collapse when built. It is, of course, implied, on the other hand, that if the work is undertaken with Yahweh's permission and blessing, no harm can come to the building or the builders—*i.e.*, no resentful *daimon* will be able to molest them (cp. Ps. 91<sup>9, 10</sup>). In the same way, unless it is Yahweh's protection against external foes that is sought, the city will fall, *the watchman watcheth in vain* (cp. Prov. 21<sup>31</sup>).

2. As the Hebrew of this verse stands, it is exceedingly difficult to make adequate sense of it; all kinds of ingenious explanations are offered in the commentaries; it is explained, for example, as meaning that God gives his chosen beloved one as much food in his sleep as those who have toiled hard for it; or that "sleep" is to be taken in a figurative sense of not worrying about food and drink, which God will supply, and Matth. 6<sup>24</sup> is referred to; or that we have here the echo of the fairy-tale, according to which a man goes to sleep hungry, and dreams of eating; then he wakes up and finds the food by his side; or else the text is emended so as to read, "and so there is given restless sleep", *i.e.*,—those who worry about earning their livelihood have bad nights. Explanations of this kind strike us as unsatisfactory. We suggest, therefore, that the word for "sleep", *šena*, is an error for *yēša'*, lit. "salvation", but not infrequently used in the sense of "welfare" or "prosperity" (see, *e.g.*, Ps. 24<sup>5</sup>, 25<sup>5</sup>, 65<sup>5</sup>); with this emended form of the text, cp. Prov. 10<sup>22</sup>. Further, we suggest that, as in the case of some other psalms, there has been a slight dislocation of the text, and that the last half-line of *v.* 2 should be the first one of the verse; this, with "Yahweh" inserted, gives a threefold consecutive insistence on "If Yahweh doth not" in the first half of each line, with the threefold "in vain" in the second half; a symmetry is thus gained, which is paralleled elsewhere (see Ps. 22<sup>4, 5</sup>, and 87). Moreover, by this not all too-drastic emendation, we get a logical sequence and edifying teaching.

The second fragment, 3-5, has, as already remarked, a point of attachment with the preceding in that it, too, speaks of a "building" though in a metaphorical sense—*i.e.*, in the "building-up" of a family (*e.g.*, Deut. 25<sup>9</sup>, Ruth 4<sup>11</sup>, 1 Sam. 2<sup>35</sup>, 1 Kgs. 9<sup>38</sup>), and this is ascribed to the will of Yahweh (see, *e.g.*, Gen. 14<sup>2</sup>, 30<sup>3</sup>, Exod. 1<sup>21</sup>), hence the words of 3: *Behold, sons are the heritage of Yahweh*; the capability

of bearing children was the *gift*, lit. "reward", of Yahweh: *his gift is the fruit of the womb*. There was no greater joy to the ancient Israelite than that of becoming the father of a numerous progeny (cp. Ps. 128<sup>3, 4</sup>), sons rather than daughters, for, according to antique thought, the male was the more important because he alone was thought to be competent to worship (*kultfähig*, as it is succinctly expressed in German); the duties of sons to their deceased father were considered of paramount importance. The Hebrews married young, so that while a man was still in his prime he might have several sons who had reached manhood; the Sage compares them with *arrows in the hand of a warrior*, or "mighty man"; they are called *sons of youth* because their father was in the vigour of youth when they were born (cp. Prov. 5<sup>18</sup>); surrounded by them he can look *his enemies in the gate* boldly in the face (5).

### *Religious Teaching.*

The special point of interest is the stress laid on the divine interest and intervention in the ordinary affairs of every-day life. The conviction that all human activities are under divine oversight is beautifully expressed in Deut. 28<sup>6</sup>, where it is said of the godly man: "Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out"; similarly in Ps. 121<sup>8</sup>. This is a truth only too often lost sight of, but it is one often taught by our Lord: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matth. 6<sup>32</sup>); "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Luke 12<sup>7</sup>).

## PSALM 128

COMMENTATORS differ in their opinions as to whether this psalm is to be regarded as containing a statement of facts, or whether it expresses a series of wishes. It embodies both. Written in the style of the Wisdom-writers, it opens with a statement of fact, following upon which other statements of fact are pronounced; and it concludes, in the last two verses, with the expression of wishes. Not that the Sage is addressing a particular individual, as some commentators hold; he pictures in his mind's eye the God-fearing man in general—in this case a man of the peasant class—and apostrophizes him as though present. This is in the style of the Wisdom-writers (see, e.g., Prov. 19<sup>18-20</sup>, 25<sup>16, 17, 21, 22</sup>, and often elsewhere).

The psalm illustrates the truth of the outstanding theme of the Wisdom-literature: the fear of Yahweh is the beginning (better, "zenith") of wisdom. That the Sage is not advocating a purely utilitarian view of religion, such as is expressed, e.g., in Gen. 28<sup>20, 21</sup>,

is seen from the words : " And mayest thou see the welfare of Jerusalem all the days of thy life " (v. 5) ; as Jerusalem was the centre of worship, the wish implies that the God-fearing man may cultivate worship for itself, not merely for what may be gained by it. To contend, as some commentators do, that vv. 4-6, or any portion of them, are not part of the original psalm, but due to a glossator, is to do an injustice to the author.

That the psalm is not a pilgrim-psalm is clear from its contents ; its inclusion in the group may have been due to the opening words (v. 1). The date is the same as that of the preceding psalm.

The metre is uniformly 3 : 2.

#### *A Song of Ascents.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Happy is every one that feareth<br>Yahweh,                                   | that walketh in his ways :                 |
| 2. The labour of thy hands ° thou dost eat,                                     | happy art thou, and well it is with thee ; |
| 3. Thy wife is like a fruitful vine,<br>Thy sons are like shoots of olive-trees | within thy house ;<br>about thy table.     |
| 4. Behold, thus ° is the man blest  | that feareth Yahweh.                       |
| 5. May Yahweh bless thee from Zion  | ° . . . . . °                              |
| And mayest thou see the welfare of<br>Jerusalem                                 | all the days of thy life ;                 |
| 6. And mayest thou see thy sons' sons ;   | Peace upon Israel.                         |

#### *Text-critical Notes*

2. Om., with G, 'פ, " for ". 4. Om., with some Hebr. MSS and the Versions, 'פ. 5. A half-line seems to have fallen out.

1. The inculcation of the *fear* of *Yahweh* belongs predominantly to the *Hakamim*, " Wise-men ", in their writings (Ps. 111<sup>10</sup>, Prov. 9<sup>10</sup>, 14<sup>26, 27</sup>, 15<sup>16</sup>, 19<sup>23</sup> and elsewhere) ; the word connotes reverential awe, which induces a man to *walk in his ways* ; everyone who does so is *happy*, which expresses the original better than " blessed " (see 1 Kgs. 10<sup>8</sup>, Prov. 3<sup>13</sup>, 8<sup>34</sup>, 14<sup>21</sup>, and vv. 2, 3, of our psalm) ; for the sense in which we understand " blessed " another word is used in Hebrew, see v. 5 of our psalm. The Sage then goes on to indicate wherein this happiness consists. 2, 3. The figure pictured by the Sage is that of a prosperous Palestinian peasant, prosperous because he is God-fearing. One would suppose that for the small peasant proprietor to be able to partake of the food produced by his own labour would represent what was normal and obvious ; so that when the Sage speaks of the man as *happy* and fortunate—*well it is with thee*—because *he eats the labour of his hands*, it indicates that there must have been frequent periods during which very different conditions held sway ; and, indeed, the history of Israel in both early and late times shows this to have been the case. The small land-owners and peasants were only too often the victims of oppression and maltreatment, whether owing to wars and foreign domination (Jer. 21<sup>7</sup>), or to powerful tyrants among their own people

(Am. 5<sup>11</sup>, Mic. 6<sup>10-12</sup>), not to speak of times of drought and famine, (Hag. 1<sup>11</sup>), locust pests, and the like (Joel 1<sup>4</sup>). However, at the time when this psalm was written conditions were, at any rate temporarily, propitious. The Sage contemplates a homely scene, a picture of ideal family life. The peasant's wife he compares with a *fruitful vine* (cp. Ezek. 19<sup>10</sup>); just as the clusters hang upon the vine-stock, so do her children cling to her *within the house*; the word used refers to that part of the house set apart for the wife, lit. "the innermost parts." The sons, sitting round the table, are compared with the young *shoots of olive-trees* (cp. Ps. 52<sup>8</sup>); the word used (*zaiith*) refers only to the cultivated tree, not to the wild olive; it is an ever-green, and the prophet extols its beauty (Hos. 14<sup>6</sup>); the comparison is, therefore, a very pretty one. On the great desire to have sons, see above, p. 519. A happy home, a good wife, numerous offspring, and sufficiency of food—these things are the possession of him who fears Yahweh, and they are the signs of his being *blest* by him. 5. This blessing is sent forth from Zion, where the divine presence was sought; thus the Sage expresses the wish, *May Yahweh bless thee from Zion*; and he adds words of much significance; for the further wish that the recipient of the divine blessing *may see the welfare of Jerusalem all the days of his life* expresses, in effect, the long-cherished conception of the solidarity of the people; the welfare of the individual is conditioned by that of the community; and this can be assured only by loyalty in the worship of Yahweh, the centre of whose worship was Jerusalem. The addition in 6 of the wish, *and mayst thou see thy sons' sons* (cp. Prov. 17<sup>8</sup>), in this connexion, implies something more than that the happy father may live to be a grandfather, though doubtless this is present too, since long life was one of the greatest blessings; but the close connexion of this with the mention of *the welfare of Jerusalem all the days of thy life* makes it not fanciful to perceive here also the implied wish that the welfare of Jerusalem may be prolonged. Jerusalem, as the "mother" of the people (e.g., Isa. 50<sup>1</sup>, 54<sup>1</sup>), was ever in the minds of the true worshippers of Yahweh, and the psalmists were among the most outstanding of those who conceived of Jerusalem as the place where his glory dwelt (Ps. 26<sup>8</sup>). With the concluding words, *Peace be upon Israel*, cp. Ps. 125<sup>5</sup>, 131<sup>3</sup>, 134<sup>3</sup>.

### *Religious Teaching.*

This has been sufficiently indicated in the exegetical notes.

## PSALM 129

THE psalmist casts a glance back on the past history of his people, with its long tale of enemy invasions and cruel oppression; but he reflects that all attempts to subjugate the people had been in vain, because Yahweh had frustrated the intentions of the enemy. The contemplation of this convinces the psalmist that no attempt against Zion (synonymous with Jerusalem, *e.g.*, Ps. 51<sup>18</sup>) will succeed, *cp.* Isa. 40<sup>9, 10</sup>.

It must be recognized that if this psalm was written in post-exilic times, it is difficult to understand how the psalmist, in looking back over the past history of his people, could say—putting the words into the mouth of the nation—that their enemies had not prevailed against them. After the Exile Palestine was under Persian suzerainty until the end of the fourth century; then it came under Ptolemaic rule until early in the second century; after that it was incorporated in the Syrian Empire, and soon after the accession of Antiochus IV, in 175 B.C., Jerusalem was attacked, “and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame”, and “the sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness” (1 Macc. 1<sup>20 ff., 39</sup>). In 166/5, it is true, the victory of Judas Maccabæus, and after him the heroism of his brothers and their followers, ultimately succeeded in throwing off the Syrian yoke (142 B.C.), and for about three-quarters of a century the Jewish nation was independent; in 63 B.C. the land was incorporated in the Roman Empire. When, therefore during the whole of the post-exilic period, could the words “yet they prevailed not against me” apply? And how could the psalmist possibly say: “put to shame and turned backward are all that hate Zion” when recalling past history? The answer given is, of course, that the reference is to the victory of Judas Maccabæus, and the re-dedication of the temple on mount Zion. There are, however, one or two considerations which raise doubts as to the correctness of this conclusion. The state of affairs, in spite of the victory of Judas Maccabæus, could not have prompted the words, “Yet they prevailed not against us”; for the Jews were still a subject nation, and significant are the words in 1 Macc. 5<sup>1, 2</sup> which follow immediately after the account of the re-dedication of the temple: “And it came to pass, when the Gentiles round about heard that the altar was built, and the sanctuary dedicated as aforetime, they were exceeding wroth. And they took counsel to destroy the race of Jacob that was in the midst of them, and they began to slay and destroy among the people.” Further, the context in which, in our psalm, the words “put to shame and turned backwards are all that hate Zion” stand, makes it clear that non-Israelite enemies are referred to. Now, apart from the fact that these words would be quite inappropriate if they referred to the victory



of Judas Maccabæus, as the quotation from 1 Macc. 5<sup>1, 2</sup> shows, the attack on the temple and the desecration of the altar on Mount Zion were largely due to the co-operation of renegade hellenistic Jews (see 1 Macc. 1<sup>34</sup>, "and they (*i.e.*, the Syrians) put there a sinful nation, transgressors of the law", and cp. 1<sup>11 a</sup>); if the psalmist had been referring to this event, some reference to the unfaithful among his own people might well have been expected. The fact is that in the case of all those psalms which some commentators assign to the Maccabæan period, the details recorded in the very reliable book of 1 *Maccabees* do not seem to have been sufficiently considered. We have, moreover, seen that there is some reason to believe that the psalms as we now have them were already in existence by about 200 B.C.; definite proof of this is not claimed, but the possibility must be granted (see Vol. I, pp. 67 ff.); and if there is any justification for the belief, the contention that certain psalms were written during the Maccabæan period cannot be sustained.

With regard to this psalm there are certainly, so far as the language is concerned, one or two indications of late date; but these may well be due to the working-over of scribes in subsequent times; a process to which many of the psalms have been subjected.

We come, then, to consider the question as to whether our psalm may not have been written, originally, in reference to some other event. Let us note, first, that the words "Put to shame and turned backwards, are all that hate Zion" imply belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem. This was a conception held by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 31<sup>5</sup>), and was first prompted by the quite astounding withdrawal, as it appeared to the people, of the Assyrian army which was besieging Jerusalem, 701 B.C., in the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 19<sup>32-36</sup>). Assuming, for the sake of argument, that our psalm was written in reference to this event, *vv.* 1, 2 record historical truth; over and over again the land had been attacked; but Judah had hitherto always remained an independent kingdom. The words of *v.* 3 become very significant if read in the light of Isa. 10<sup>28-32</sup>, where the prophet describes the route of the ravaging Assyrian army, through the country towards Jerusalem. In 2 Kgs. 19<sup>26</sup>, Sennacherib's army is compared with "the grass on the house-tops", the identical expression used in *v.* 6 of our psalm, so, too, in Isa. 37<sup>27</sup>. We contend, therefore, that there is something to be said in favour of a pre-exilic date for our psalm.

The metre is 3 : 2; the final line of *v.* 8, which has three beats, is held by some commentators to be a later liturgical addition; but a final benediction occurs in other psalms (*e.g.*, 84, 89, 128).

*A Song of Ascents.*

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth up, | well may Israel say,               |
| 2. Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth up, | yet they prevailed not against me; |

3. On my back the ploughers ploughed,  
 4. Yahweh—he is righteous, may he cut asunder  
 5. Let them be put to shame, and turned backward,  
 6. Let them be like the grass on housetops,  
 7. Wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand,  
 8. And they that pass by do not say :  
 We bless you in the name of Yahweh .
- made long ° their furrows .  
 the cord of the wicked.  
 all that hate Zion ;  
 ° which the east-wind blighteth °.  
 nor the binder his bosom.  
 “ Yahweh's blessing ° on you °,  
 “ Yahweh's blessing ° on you °,

## Text-critical Notes

3. Read, with *Kethibh* לְמַעַן־יִרְדּוּ for the *Qere* יִרְדּוּ — “ their furrow ”; for the use of לְ here see GK 143e. 6. Read, with some commentators, שֶׁנֶּחֱרָץ for the present text, “ which before one draweth it forth drieth up ”; see further, *exeg.* note. 8. Read עַל־יְדֵי־כֶסֶם for אֶל־יְדֵי־כֶסֶם, “ unto you ”.

1-2. The past history of *Israel*, used here collectively of the northern and southern kingdoms, furnished ample grounds for the words which the psalmist represents as spoken by the nation personified; enemy onslaughts had continued intermittently for centuries, first the Canaanites (Josh. 9<sup>1-2</sup>, Judg. 4, 5), then the Philistines (1 Sam. 4 31, 2 Sam. 5<sup>19-25</sup>, cp. Isa. 9<sup>12</sup>), later the Aramæans (Syrians, 1 Kgs. 20, 2 Kgs. 6), followed by the Assyrians (2 Kgs. 18<sup>9</sup> <sup>a</sup>; 19); from the beginning of the history of Israel as a nation this had gone on, from its *youth* onwards—*i.e.*, from “ the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt ”, “ the days of her youth ” (Hos. 2<sup>15</sup> <sup>(17)</sup>, cp. Deut. 26<sup>5-7</sup>, Jer. 2<sup>2</sup>). Yet in spite of all these invasions of the land, even in spite of defeats, the nation continued to be independent; so that it could truly be said that the enemies *prevailed* not against Israel.

3. The metaphor which the psalmist uses is twofold: first, Israel identifies herself with the land upon which the *ploughers made long their furrows*, cp. Isa. 51<sup>23</sup>, “ Bow down that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy back as the ground, and as the street, to them that go over ”; and we are reminded of the ravages of the Assyrian army passing over the land (see Isa. 10<sup>28-32</sup>). 4. Then Israel is compared with the oxen attached to the plough by a rope, or *cord* (cp. Isa. 5<sup>18</sup>, where the same word is used); but this rope *Yahweh cuts* asunder, so that *the wicked*—*i.e.*, Israel's enemies—can no longer continue ploughing; in other words, the attack of the enemy is frustrated by Yahweh (cp. 2 Kgs. 19<sup>35</sup>, “ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of Yahweh went forth, and smote the camp of the Assyrians . . . ”). 5. Thus, all the enemies who attempted to seize Zion (identified with Jerusalem as in Isa. 4<sup>3</sup>, 64<sup>10</sup>, Mic. 3<sup>10, 12</sup>), *all that hate Zion, are put to shame and turned backward*; 6. they are compared, so complete is their discomfiture, with the *grass* that grows on *housetops* (cp. 2 Kgs. 19<sup>26</sup>, Isa. 37<sup>27</sup>), where there is very little soil, and the grass cannot take firm root, so as soon as the east wind blows it is *blighted* (cp. Ps. 48<sup>7</sup>,

78<sup>26</sup> and Gen. 41<sup>23, 27</sup>); as the present Hebrew text stands, it can hardly be correct: "which drieth up before one draweth it forth"; the simile is inappropriate, and the Hebrew word for "draweth forth" is used only of drawing a sword, and drawing on a sandal; hence our emendation. 7, 8. *Grass*, especially grass like this, so insignificant and transient, is not worth gathering; it is not like the ripened, golden corn, no *reaper* (the word is used ironically) *filleteth his hand, nor bindeth in his bosom*, it is such a contemptible weed; let alone the idea of giving such a "reaper" the usual greeting of those *that pass by*: *Yahweh's blessing on you, we bless you in the name of Yahweh*.

### *Religious Teaching.*

It is only in vv. 4, 5 that any religious teaching appears in this psalm; and here the prophetic doctrine of Yahweh as the God of History emerges. Because Yahweh is righteous, he has not permitted the enemies to prevail against Israel, and their designs upon the sanctuary of Zion have been frustrated. The enemies of Israel are the enemies of Yahweh; they are described as the wicked ones because they do not acknowledge him. The righteousness of Yahweh is thus vindicated. But it must be recognized that in one respect this psalm lacks an element which the prophets constantly emphasized, and which is prominent elsewhere in the *Psalms*. In recalling the past sufferings of his people, this psalmist has no word to say as to why they had been subjected to these sufferings. When it is remembered how often the prophets insisted on the fact that all the calamities which the nation suffered were the consequences of sin; when it is noted, further, that often in the psalms when, as here, the historical past is recalled, it is confessed that sin has been the cause of national sufferings (e.g., Ps. 78<sup>21, 22, 56-64</sup>, 79<sup>8, 9</sup>, 106<sup>6 ff.</sup>), then it must be recognized that the absence of all mention of sin where it is rightly to be expected betrays a lack of the sense of sin on the part of the writer of this psalm. The somewhat uncharitable wish expressed in v. 6 may, in part, be due to this want of the sense of sin. Attention is drawn to this solely because it is well to recognize the negative side, as well as the far more abundant positive contributions to religious teaching, found among the psalmists.

### PSALM 130

THAT this psalm should be reckoned as one of the "Songs of Ascents" shows in what a haphazard way this title has been used. The psalm is in striking contrast to that which precedes it, in that it expresses a sense of sin as sincere and deep as can be found anywhere in the Old

Testament. The subject of its contents will be more appropriately dealt with in the exegetical notes, where the religious teaching is set forth.

That the Hebrew text of *vv.* 5-7 is in some disorder is held by most commentators to be the case. Probably they are right. Nevertheless, the suggested emendations are somewhat drastic; we have, therefore, sought to keep as near as possible to the text as it stands; for it is possible that its uneven form may be due to the nature of the psalm as the outpouring of a penitent's over-full heart.

The metre seems to be a combination of 3 : 2 and 2 : 2; though if emended on the lines of most modern commentators, it is 3 : 2 throughout.

The developed sense of sin marks the psalm as of late date.

### *A Song of Ascents.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Out of the depths do I cry unto thee,<br>Yahweh,<br>Let thine ears give heed                   | 2. ° hear my voice;<br>to the cry of my supplication. |
| 3. If thou retainest iniquities, ° Yahweh °,  | ° who shall stand ?                                   |
| 4. But with thee is forgiveness,  | that thou mayest be feared.                           |
| 5. I wait for Yahweh,<br>My soul doth wait,<br>I hope for ° his word.                             |   |
| 6. My soul ° for Yahweh ! °<br>More than watchers for the morn,<br>Than watchers for the morn.    |   |
| 7. O Israel, wait for Yahweh,<br>For with Yahweh is love,<br>And, plenteous redemption with him ; |   |
| 8. And he redeemeth Israel  | from all his sins.                                    |

### *Text-critical Notes*

2. Om. *יְהוָה* for the rhythm's sake. 3. Read *יְהוָה* for *יְהוָה*. Om. *יְהוָה* for the rhythm's sake. 5. Om. *וְ*, "and". 6. Read *לְיְהוָה* for *לְיְהוָה*, "for the Lord".

1, 2. Through a misunderstanding of the use of Hebrew tenses, the English Versions represent the psalmist as referring to the past, whereas he is dealing solely with the present. There is a peculiar significance in the expression *out of the depths*, used in this connexion of a penitent sinner pleading for forgiveness; by *the depths* are meant the depths of the sea, and, as will be seen from Isa. 51<sup>10</sup>, the sea is identical with *Tehom Rabbah*, "the great deep", which is the Hebrew form of the Babylonian Tiamat, the primeval monster, who was *the embodiment of evil*. By the expression *out of the depths*, therefore, the psalmist means that, as one steeped in sin, he cries to Yahweh. The contention of some commentators that the psalmist speaks as one suffering from sickness, inflicted because of his sins, has nothing to support it; not physical suffering, but the agony of a penitent heart, is what is here presented. In fitting humility the psalmist feels that he is far from God, and therefore uses the word for I cry which means

to "cry aloud" (cp., e.g., Judg. 9<sup>7</sup>), pleading that Yahweh will *give heed to the cry* (lit. "voice") of his *supplication*; this word is a plural abstract, and should not be used as a word in the plural number (cp. Ps. 128<sup>2, 6</sup>, 31<sup>23</sup>, 86<sup>6</sup>, 140<sup>6</sup>). Fully in accord with his sense of unworthiness is the striking way in which the psalmist refrains from pleading directly for that which he most earnestly desires; nowhere does he pray, in so many words, for forgiveness, but he implies that this is his deepest yearning, see v. 4. 3. If there is no forgiveness, if Yahweh still retains in his memory the acts of rebellion against him, who can abide it? *If thou retainest iniquities, Yahweh, who shall stand?* Possibly the last word is used as in Job. 30<sup>20</sup>: "I stand (in prayer), and thou lookest not at me." 4. But with Yahweh, as the psalmist knows, there is *forgiveness* (cp. Ps. 86<sup>5</sup>). The words which follow: *that thou mayest be feared*, mean that divine forgiveness, whereby sin is obliterated, quickens in the heart of the forgiven sinner reverential awe and love for Yahweh. Hence the soul-felt gratitude engendered by the conviction that he is forgiven, and expressed by the firm resolution of amendment of life: *I wait for Yahweh*. 5, 6. The words of, as it were, breathless devotion are poured forth in spontaneous utterance, careless of literary *convenances*. 7, 8. And, like every true and faithful servant of God, his thought is for others as well as for himself; his happiness must be shared; and he calls upon his people to *wait for Yahweh*, with whom is *love* and *redemption* from sin.

One cannot fail to be struck by the fact that in this psalm, with its deep sense of sin and yearning for forgiveness, there is not a word about atoning sacrifices. Another mark of the intense spirituality of the writer.

### *Religious Teaching*

This has been sufficiently dealt with in the foregoing notes.

### PSALM 131

THIS beautiful little psalm, unique in the Psalter, is in part a confession, and in part a revelation of deep religious experiences. The writer, in repudiating the spirit of presumptuous knowledge, implies that at one time this had been his attitude of mind; but now he has come to his better self, and has quieted the restless turbulence of his thoughts. In sweet humility he compares his trustful rest in the Lord with that of a little child lying in blissful repose on its mother's breast. Like other psalmists, what he has gained he wishes others to share, and his yearning is that they should experience the happy calm which he enjoys;

so he ends with an exhortation to his people to "wait for Yahweh from henceforth and for ever".

The psalm is difficult to render worthily in translation; the Hebrew words imply so much that they can be expressed adequately only by paraphrase.

There is no indication of date; but that is immaterial in a psalm like this. The metre is 3 : 2.

*A Song of Ascents. ° David's °.*

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Yahweh, my heart is not presumptuous, | not arrogant mine eyes;             |
| Not do I ponder things too great,        | too wonderful, for me;              |
| 2. Truly I have stilled, have quieted my |                                     |
| soul,                                    | like a weaned-child on its mother.° |
| 3. O Israel, wait for Yahweh             | from henceforth and for ever.       |

*Text-critical Notes*

*Title:* כָּנַמְל עָלַי נַפְשִׁי should probably be omitted, as in G. 2. Om. "like the weaned-child upon me is my soul" as it gives a half-line too much.

1. The opening words of the psalm, *my heart is not presumptuous*, are susceptible of more than one meaning; the Hebrew word rendered *presumptuous*, is lit. "to be high", or "exalted", and can have the sense of "lifted up"—i.e., drawn upwards, in the ways of Yahweh (2 Chron. 17<sup>6</sup>); this is not likely to be the meaning here, though it might conceivably imply spiritual pride; again, in the light of the context, it may mean pretentiousness in claiming to possess great knowledge. Probably, however, whatever else it may include, it means here the attitude of self-sufficient, presumptuous pride (as in Ezek. 19<sup>11</sup>, 31<sup>5, 10, 14</sup>), which, according to the context, is more specifically defined. The psalmist is thinking of the time when, in self-esteem, he thought he knew more than others, and considered himself superior, when in arrogance he looked down upon his fellow-men (cp. Ps. 18<sup>27</sup>, 101<sup>5</sup>). But he has cast all this aside now; he does not *ponder*, lit. "walk in", *things too great*, and *too wonderful* for him—i.e., deep matters which are beyond his comprehension. What it was which produced the profound change in the psalmist's mental and spiritual condition, he does not say; but that he went through severe struggles is evident from his words: 2. *I have stilled, have quieted my soul*; the former of these expressions means lit. "to be smooth", and is used of levelling unevennesses on the ground (Isa. 28<sup>25</sup>), while in Isa. 38<sup>13</sup>, it refers to the quieting of mental disturbance; the other expression means lit. "to be silent", so that the words might be paraphrased: I have calmed the disturbing arguments, and silenced the disconcerting questionings that worried me. The comparison of his reposeful state of sublime self-abandonment to God with a child's unspoken trust in its mother's love and care, is as touching as it is beautiful. And the mention of a *weaned-child* (it is only one word in Hebrew) is not

without significance: the psalmist might well have said, "suckling", but the point is that the children were weaned comparatively late (see 1 Sam. 1<sup>22-24</sup>), and the weaned child knew not only instinctively, but by experience, what a mother's love and care were; similarly, the psalmist's childlike trust in Yahweh rests on the experience of his love, "I know him whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1<sup>12</sup>). The final words of the psalm (3) are thought by some to be a later addition; this may be doubted; they express the hallowed wish, found in other psalms too, and characteristic of every truly pious Israelite, that others might partake of the spiritual peace which he himself enjoys (cp. Ps. 128<sup>6</sup>, 130<sup>8</sup>).

### *Religious Teaching*

In spite of the extreme brevity of this psalm, its religious teaching is of inestimable value. The first thing to note is that *self-knowledge* leads to *confession*, which implies *repentance*. Whatever form the psalmist's presumptuous arrogance may have assumed in the past, whether spiritual pride which despised others, like a certain type of Pharisees "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought" (Luke 18<sup>9</sup>), or whether a claim to superior knowledge, "this multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed" (John 7<sup>49</sup>)—both seem to be implied—he has been brought to know himself; he has acquired self-knowledge, a thing which can be attained only by those who are truly honest with themselves. To such, as the psalmist implies, self-esteem is impossible; and his comparison with a little child witnesses to his conception of the blessedness of genuine *humility* ("Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child shall be great in the kingdom of heaven", Matth. 18<sup>4</sup>). And, lastly, the psalmist tells of the restful peace engendered by a childlike trust in God. Very appositely does Herkenne quote St. Augustine's words: "Our heart is restless till it rests in Thee, O God" (*Conf.* 1<sup>1</sup>).

### PSALM 132.

SOME verses in this psalm (7-9, 13-16) fully account for its having been incorporated in the collection of "pilgrim songs". Its liturgical character is evident: a solo voice sang vv. 1, 2, another singer took up vv. 3-5, whereupon the temple choir sang vv. 6-10. It may be surmised that vv. 11, 12 were sung by a soloist, after which another solo voice sang the remainder of the psalm. Like others of the "royal" psalms, this one was composed by a court official in the name of the king. To interpret the psalm in a Messianic sense is to miss its mean-

ing; it recalls the past, but deals with the present. That it was so interpreted in later times, when the Davidic dynasty was no more in existence, is easily understood; but there is nothing in the psalm itself to show that the writer intended his words to be understood in a Messianic sense. It has been contended that the psalm was written in Maccabæan times; but that it cannot refer to a Maccabæan ruler should be obvious, for the Hasmonæans did not belong to the house of David (see 1 Macc. 2<sup>1</sup>, and cp. 1 Chron. 9<sup>10</sup>); other indications in the psalm show the weakness of this contention. The psalm is of pre-exilic date, and belongs to the later period of the monarchy.

In one or two particulars there are variations from the accounts contained in the historical books; this may be due to the psalmist permitting himself some poetical licence, or to legendary material which has not come down to us, or they may be due to the hand of some later scribe.

The metre is uniformly 3 : 3.

#### *A Song of Ascents.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Remember, Yahweh, David,                    | ° thy servant °, and all his affliction,   |
| 2. How he sware to Yahweh,                     | vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob :         |
| 3. " I will not enter the habitation of my     | nor ascend the couch of my resting         |
| house  | place,                                     |
| 4. I will not give sleep to mine eyes,         | to mine eyelids slumber,                   |
| 5. Till I find a place for Yahweh,             | a dwelling for the Mighty One of           |
|  | Jacob."                                    |
| 6. Lo, we heard of it in Ephratah,             | we found it in the fields of Ja'ar ;       |
| 7. Let us go unto his dwelling-place,          | let us worship at the stool of his feet.   |
| 8. Arise, Yahweh, to thy resting-place,        | thou and thy mighty Ark.                   |
| 9. Let thy priests be rightly clothed,         | and thy saints ° let them shout for joy °. |
| 10. For the sake of David thy servant,         | turn not away the face of thine anointed.  |
| 11. Yahweh did sware to David,                 | of a truth, he will not turn from it :     |
| ° [I will set up thy seed after thee,          | and I will establish the throne of thy     |
|  | kingdom] °                                 |
| 12. " If thy sons keep my covenant             | ° and my testimonies ° which I teach       |
|  | them,                                      |
| Their sons also for ever                       | shall sit upon thy throne."                |
| 13. For Yahweh hath chosen Zion,               | hath desired it for his habitation :       |
| 14. " This is my resting-place for ever,       | here will I abide, for I have desired it.  |
| 15. Her provision will I greatly bless,        | her poor will I satisfy with food ;        |
| 16. Her priests will I clothe with prosperity, | and her saints shall shout for joy.        |
| 17. There will I cause to flourish the horn    | I have prepared a lamp for mine            |
| of David,                                      | anointed ;                                 |
| 18. His enemies will I clothe with shame,      | but on him shall his crown glisten."       |

#### *Text-critical Notes*

1. Add לַעֲבֹדָה as the rhythm requires another word. 9. Read, as in v. 16, רָצִין יִרְצֵנִי. 11. Something has fallen out of the text here; for the expression "the fruit of thy body" in the present text cp. Mic. 6<sup>7</sup>. We have, quite tentatively, adapted the words which occur in 2 Sam. 7<sup>11-13</sup>: אֲנִי אֶחְיֶה וְאַתָּה אֶחְיֶה וְאַתָּה אֶחְיֶה וְאַתָּה אֶחְיֶה : וְכִנְיָתִי אֶתִּירָשָׁה מִמְּלִכְתְּךָ. 12. Read, with G, וְעֲדָתִי for רָחֵם — "and my testimony".

1. The word of prayer with which the psalm opens, *Remember, Yahweh, David thy servant*, is reiterated in 10, and is prompted by the oath of Yahweh, recalled in 10. The reference to David's *affliction*, lit.



"his being afflicted", causes some little difficulty; the context shows that the meaning here cannot be as in Ps. 119<sup>71</sup>, Isa. 53<sup>4</sup>, where the affliction is from God; it is therefore probable that it is used in the technical sense, as in Lev. 23<sup>29</sup>, of afflicting oneself with fasting or castigation (1 Chron. 22<sup>14</sup> has a different form of the word); but if so, there is nothing in the historical books to suggest that David underwent such self-infliction as a preparation for gathering the money required for the building of the temple; either, therefore, we have here some poetical exaggeration on the part of the psalmist, or else the echo of some legendary account of the life of David which has not been otherwise preserved. 2. David's oath to Yahweh is then spoken of. There are several references to David's intention of building a house for Yahweh (1 Chron. 22<sup>7</sup>, 28<sup>3</sup>, 1 Kgs. 8<sup>17</sup>, and elsewhere), but it is not said that he *swore to Yahweh* to do this; nor is there any mention of *the Mighty One of Jacob* in this connexion; this title of Yahweh occurs elsewhere only in Gen. 49<sup>24</sup>, Isa. 49<sup>26</sup>, 60<sup>16</sup> (in Isa. 1<sup>24</sup> it is "the Mighty One of Israel"); it is very ancient, and originally was probably *'ābbîr ya'āqôb*, "the bull of Jacob" (cp. the parallel "the Stone of Israel" in Gen. 49<sup>24</sup>), and was altered to *'abîr ya'āqôb* later to avoid its being associated with the bull-worship of northern Israel (cp. 1 Kgs. 12<sup>28, 29</sup>, "calf" = a young bull). Here again, then, the psalmist seems to be echoing the words of some source which has not come down to us. And this applies with especial force to what follows in 3-5, which seem to be something more than a poetical exaggeration of 2 Sam. 7<sup>2, 3</sup>, 1 Kgs. 8<sup>17, 18</sup>.

In 6-10, which were probably taken up by the temple choir, the psalmist places himself in the past and purports to quote the words of David and of those who, with him, brought up the Ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem (1 Sam. 7<sup>1, 2</sup>, 2 Sam. 6<sup>2-12</sup>, 1 Chron. 13<sup>1-14</sup>). It was when David was living in *Ephratah*—i.e., Bethlehem (see Ruth 4<sup>11</sup>, Mic. 5<sup>2</sup>, cp. 1 Sam. 17<sup>12</sup>)—that he first heard of the existence of the Ark; thereupon he went to seek it, and *found it in the fields* (better "pasture-land") of *Ja'ar*, an abbreviated form of Kirjath-jearim. There is some difference of opinion as to what is to be understood by the "it" in *we heard of it*, and *we found it*; the Hebrew has "her" (*'ārôn*, "Ark", is fem. in 1 Sam. 4<sup>17</sup>, 2 Chron. 8<sup>11</sup>); but the Vulgate renders it in the masc., "him", in reference to Yahweh; this rendering is followed by Gunkel. Then, again, as in Hebrew, the fem. gender is often used as neuter, Kittel takes it in a neutral sense, "we heard about it"—i.e., the whereabouts of the presence of the Ark; but this cannot possibly apply to "we found it". A similar objection must be urged against Yahweh being the object, unless it be conceded that Yahweh was identified with the Ark, in which case there is no need to alter the text to "him". Now it is evident that the close association

of Yahweh with the Ark occasioned its identification with him to be held in early times; Num. 10<sup>33-36</sup> (J) illustrates this; our psalm, of later date, presents a fluctuating frame of mind, which at one time identifies, at another clearly differentiates, between the Ark and Yahweh; thus, while it cannot be meant that Yahweh was first *heard of in Ephratah*, nor that he was *found in the fields of Ja'ar*, yet something approaching the idea of identification is at least adumbrated in the parallelism: *Arise, Yahweh, to thy resting-place, thou and thy mighty Ark*, lit. "the Ark of thy strength". On the other hand, there is a clear differentiation in the words: *Let us go unto his dwelling-place—i.e., Zion—let us worship at the stool of his feet*; the Ark is spoken of as "the footstool of our God" in 1 Chron. 28<sup>2</sup> (though in this passage the "building of an house" is used for the Ark); this differentiation reflects a later stage in the conception of Yahweh. The mention of the Ark as playing a rôle in the temple cult is another proof of the pre-exilic date of the psalm, though, as there are various Deuteronomic references to the Ark (Deut. 31<sup>25, 26</sup>, cp. Josh. 8<sup>33</sup>, 1 Kgs. 3<sup>15</sup>, 4<sup>19</sup>, 8<sup>9, 21</sup>), the psalm must belong to late pre-exilic times; for the final disappearance of the Ark is referred to in Jer. 3<sup>16</sup>; in Ezra 1<sup>7-11</sup> no mention is made of it in the list of sacred vessels. In 9, 10 the psalmist, while still thinking of the past, in fact envisages the present; at the bringing in of the Ark to the sanctuary the priests must be clothed in fitting—i.e., festal—garments; for this force of *sedeq*, in the sense of "normal" or "right", cp. Deut. 31<sup>19</sup>, Ps. 4<sup>5</sup>, 51<sup>19</sup>; and the *saints* (*Hāsīdīm*)—i.e., the true worshippers of Yahweh—and therefore *thy saints*, are called upon to *shout for joy*. And, finally, a prayer is offered that Yahweh will look favourably upon the king; *turn not away the face of thine anointed*, and this, *for the sake of David, thy servant*. For the thought of reaping the reward of the righteousness of the forefathers cp. Gen. 26<sup>24</sup>. For 9, 10, cp. 2 Chron. 6<sup>41, 42</sup>.

Just as in the opening words of the psalm David's oath to Yahweh is recalled, so now (11, 12) Yahweh's oath to David is spoken of, an oath which, *of a truth he will not turn from*, cp. Ps. 89<sup>3, 35, 49</sup>, 110<sup>4</sup>. But the condition is that David's successors will *keep the covenant*, and observe the *testimonies* which Yahweh teaches them.

After the words of promise, put into the mouth of Yahweh, regarding the permanence of the monarchy in the Davidic line, there follows a further utterance of Yahweh (14-16) regarding the permanence of the sanctuary: *This is my resting-place for ever*. Yahweh's abiding in Zion assures that the indispensable need of sustenance will always be forthcoming; the *poor*, so often the victims of insufficiency of *food*, will be satisfied. The mention of the *priests*, whom Yahweh will *clothe with prosperity*, is not without significance; that due provision should be made for them was naturally a matter of importance, see,

e.g., Deut. 18<sup>1-8</sup>; *prosperity* (*yěša'*), often translated "salvation", means here welfare in a material sense. The priests, being well provided for, are ardent in the fulfilment of their duties in public worship, and therefore the *saints*, the true worshippers, *shout for joy*, a liturgical term (Ps. 51<sup>14</sup>, 71<sup>23</sup>, 84<sup>2</sup>, 145<sup>7</sup>).

Finally (17, 18), the psalmist reverts to the Davidic dynasty, the prosperity of which must depend on Yahweh, who *causeth to flourish the horn of David*, an expression denoting the strength (cp. Deut. 33<sup>17</sup>) of the Davidic dynasty; what is meant by the psalmist in saying that Yahweh has *prepared a lamp* for his *anointed*, is not easy to decide, and various opinions are held. In 2 Sam. 21<sup>17</sup> David is spoken of as the "lamp" of Israel, an appropriate expression in reference to the king who judges and guides his people (1 Sam. 8<sup>20</sup>, Prov. 20<sup>8</sup>, 25<sup>2, 3</sup>, 29<sup>4</sup>, cp. 16<sup>13, 15</sup>); similarly, the successor of David on the throne is called a "lamp" (1 Kgs. 11<sup>36</sup>, 15<sup>4</sup>, 2 Chron. 21<sup>7</sup>); in the verse before us, then, taking "mine anointed" as parallel to "David" in the first half of the verse, the meaning will be that Yahweh continues to prosper the dynasty of David, in accordance with which he has again *prepared*, or provided, a successor—a "lamp"—to his anointed, David, who was the anointed of Yahweh *par excellence*. In contrast to the *shame* wherewith Yahweh will *clothe*, or "cover" his enemies, the *crown* of this successor to the Davidic throne, will *glisten*; the reference is to the gold of which it is constructed (cp. the "plate of pure gold" on Aaron's mitre, Exod. 28<sup>36-38</sup>).

### *Religious Teaching*

It must be recognized, first, that the doctrine of God, as portrayed in this psalm, illustrates the persistence of old-world ideas: viz. those of God taking an oath, his desire for a dwelling-place on earth, and the quaint belief in his connexion with the Ark. These all witness to materialistic conceptions of the Deity which belong to a comparatively early religious stage. It required the experience of the Exile, and the teaching of a Deutero-Isaiah, to generate more spiritual conceptions. But there is, in spite of this, one element in the psalm which is of special interest, since it witnesses to the innate religious instinct of ancient Israel in every sphere; we mean the principle of the union which should subsist between religion and the State. The basic purpose of the psalm is to glorify the Sanctuary together with the kingship, which are inextricably bound together. The subject has been already referred to (see under Ps. 110), and there is no need to deal further with it here; but the principle involved is of profound and far-reaching importance, and the way in which it is set forth in this psalm demands grateful recognition.

## PSALM 133

It may sometimes happen that a technical term, owing to its familiarity among the Hebrews, had, for them, a significance which may not, at first sight, be appreciated nowadays. An illustration of this is presented in the psalm before us. In Deut. 25<sup>5, 6</sup> reference is made to a marriage-custom in ancient Israel which we know as the Levirate marriage (from the Latin *levir*, "brother-in-law"); according to this custom, when a man dies and has no sons, his brother must marry the widow. In Hebrew there is a verb meaning "to do the duty of a brother-in-law" (*yabam*); as Driver remarks: "The fact of Hebrew possessing a special word to indicate this particular relation is evidence that it must have been a prominent factor in ancient Hebrew society, and that the rights and duties connected with it must have been important ones".<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the custom, according to Deut. 26<sup>6</sup>, was that the name of the brother who had died should "not be blotted out of Israel"—i.e., that his name and family should be perpetuated among his people, and no doubt also that the family property should remain intact. The family tie in the earliest periods of Israel's social history was more closely maintained than in later days; the paternal authority was in those early times more absolute than in subsequent periods. In those early days sons continued to live under their father's roof, and to be subject to his authority even after they were married and had sons; in this way the unity of the family was secured, and continued to be more effectively preserved than if the sons, when they married, set up a household on their own account, and lived, it might be, in some far-off spot. And it was the custom of the Levirate marriage which further cemented family union. Now, when, in Deut. 25<sup>5</sup>, the subject of the Levirate marriage is mentioned, it is introduced by the words: "When (not "If") brethren dwell together"—i.e., it is the technical phrase used in reference to the ancient custom of brothers, even when married, all living together under the paternal roof; implying, further, that by means of the Levirate marriage-custom the perpetuation of the family was assured. Bearing this in mind, therefore, the significance of the opening verse of our psalm will be appreciated; and this significance is accentuated by the fact that, in course of time, the old Levirate marriage-custom had given place to that in which a son, on marrying, became emancipated from paternal authority, left his father's house, and set up an establishment of his own, whereby the family unity was broken, and its perpetuation, at

<sup>1</sup> *A Crit. and Exeg. Com. on Deuteronomy*, p. 283 (1902).

any rate, endangered. Thus, the psalmist, like Jeremiah (6<sup>16</sup>), extols the "old paths".<sup>1</sup>

The objection to this interpretation of the psalm, that a song of so highly inspired a nature is not likely to have been prompted by an isolated family affair of this kind ("*eine derartige einzelne Familienangelegenheit*"),<sup>2</sup> fails to realize the great importance of family social life in ancient Israel; nor does it take into account the significance attaching to a legal technical term of hoary authority.

The date of the psalm is difficult to determine, as definite indications are wanting; but it may well belong to early post-exilic times, when the return of the exiles to the homeland brought to mind in a pointed manner the family social life of long ago.

The metre is 3 : 2, with the exception of the opening verse, which is 3 : 3.

*A Song of Ascents. ° David's °.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Behold, how goodly and how beautiful,      | the dwelling together of brethren :    |
| 2. Like precious oil (it is) upon the head,   | ° which runneth down ° upon the beard, |
| —The beard of Aaron,—which runneth down       | upon the collar of his garments ;      |
| 3. Like the dew of Hermon, which runneth down | upon the hills of ° 'Iyyôn ° ;         |
| For there Yahweh commanded                    | life for evermore.                     |

*Text-critical Notes*

- Title:* some Hebr. and G omit לְדָוִד, "David's". 2. Read שָׁרַד for יָרַד.  
3. Read עֵיִן for עֵיִן, see exegetical note. Om. אֲרִי־הַבְּרָכָה, "the blessing", which overloads the half-line.

1. As pointed out in the introductory section, the *dwelling together of brethren* (there is nothing about "in unity" in the Hebrew) is a technical phrase used in reference to the earliest family custom in ancient Israel, in which brothers continued to live, even as married men with their own sons, in the dwelling-place of their father. This is *goodly* and *beautiful*, not because the brothers are living in unity—that is taken for granted—but because it was the means of perpetuating the family and its name in Israel. The metre of this line, differing from that of the rest of the psalm, seems to be purposeful; the opening words are a kind of text. 2, 3. The psalmist uses two pictures to illustrate the ideas of family continuity and family union which the ancient custom achieved. The comparisons may sound a little strange to modern Western ears, but to the Oriental mind they were sufficiently appropriate. From the father, the first founder and head of the family, the descendants issue, running down through the ages; with this the psalmist compares the *precious oil*—i.e., the "holy anointing oil"

<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of the psalm was first brought to our attention by a pamphlet published by S. Rauh: *Hebräisches Familienrecht in vorprophetischer Zeit*, pp. 35 ff. (1907).

<sup>2</sup> Herkenne, *Das Buch der Psalmen*, p. 420 (1936).

(see Exod. 30<sup>23-30</sup>, 37<sup>29</sup>), *running down upon the beard*; the reason for the mention of Aaron is that when the holy anointing oil is spoken of it is in connexion with the high-priest (Num. 35<sup>25</sup>), *Aaron* is specifically named in Exod. 29<sup>4-7</sup>, 30<sup>30</sup>. If the oil ran down to *the beard of Aaron*, as was likely enough, it would necessarily flow on to *the collar of his garments*; the word for *collar* (*pîy*, lit. "mouth", or "opening") is used in the description of "the robe of the ephod", where it is said, "and there shall be an opening for his head in the midst thereof" (Exod. 28<sup>32</sup>); the opening round the neck is obviously what we understand by a collar. Then the psalmist uses for comparison the *dew of Hermon which*, likewise, *runneth down upon the hills of 'Iyyôn*; but here there is also the idea of diffuseness, compared with the spreading family under the old conditions. The Hebrew text has "the hills of Zion"; but the dew of Hermon, far away to the north, could not possibly run all the way through Palestine to get to Zion; as Barnes remarks, it is "geographically a grotesque conception"; but his rendering: "Plenteous as the dew of Hermon is that which descendeth upon the mountains of Zion", does not represent the Hebrew. Jirku, followed by Gunkel, is surely right in reading 'Iyyôn for *Zion*; it is mentioned in 1 Kgs. 15<sup>20</sup>, 2 Kgs. 15<sup>29</sup>, 2 Chron. 16<sup>4</sup>, and refers to the hilly country which lay on the south-west foot of mount Hermon. The two words in Hebrew are almost exactly alike (יִיז and יִז); nothing could be easier than for a copyist to have misread what was before him. It is also worth noting that the Hebrew reads "hills"; the "hill of Zion" occurs very frequently, but the "hills of Zion" never.

In the concluding line the psalmist, as might logically be expected, reverts to the thought of the opening verse: *For there—i.e., in the family as composed, and united as a religious unit, under the ancient régime—Yahweh commanded*, or ordained, what results: *life for evermore*, in reference to the perpetuation of the family; "for evermore" is not to be taken in a literal sense; the expression is often used in Hebrew in the sense of long enduring—e.g., Ps. 21<sup>6</sup>, 26<sup>26</sup>, 61<sup>7</sup>, Am. 1<sup>11</sup>, Isa. 26<sup>4</sup>, 47<sup>7</sup>.

### *Religious Teaching*

Although the psalm deals specifically with the subject of social conditions in ancient Israel, it contains an element of a pronouncedly religious character. The conviction, which is implied all through, and definitely stated at its conclusion, of God's interest in the affairs of family life, witnesses to one of the most beautiful *traits* in Hebrew religion of all ages. In ancient Israel the family was, in the first instance, kept together by community of worship; whatever other purposes the Levirate law may have served, the religious motive lay at its base. This is clearly emphasized in our psalm, and constitutes its abiding value.

## PSALM 134

THIS is the last of the so-called Pilgrim-songs. The reason for its inclusion in the collection is clear. It is an introductory exhortation to the priests, sung by the High-priest, before the beginning of the service; the last verse is the response, sung by the priestly choir. It is a vigil service, held, as was usual, on the eve of one of the great festivals; this would obviously have been attended by the crowds of pilgrims, who had gathered from far and near to keep the festival. Hence the presence of the psalm in this collection.

The metre is irregular.

*A Song of Ascents.*

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. ° Bless Yahweh,                      | all ye servants of Yahweh, |
| That stand in the house-of-Yahweh       | ° at nights °;             |
| 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, | yea, bless Yahweh.         |
| 3. May Yahweh bless thee from Zion,     | Maker of heaven and earth. |

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Om. הִנֵּה, "Behold", as inappropriate in this connexion; it may have been added from the opening word of the preceding psalm by mistake. שְׁנֵי בִּלְיֹת two beats.

That the words of 1, 2 were chanted by the High-priest is probable, as Josephus specially mentions his presence in the temple at the festivals (*Bell. Jud.* v<sup>230</sup>). The words were addressed to the priests, *Bless Yahweh*, for it was only the priests who uttered blessings (cp. Deut. 10<sup>8</sup>, 21<sup>5</sup>); the *servants of Yahweh*, though often used in a wider sense, refer in this connexion specifically to the priests, not to the worshippers in general, for the reason given. The priests are those who *stand in the house-of-Yahweh*, the word "stand" is used here in the technical sense of minister (cp. Deut. 10<sup>8</sup>, Judg. 20<sup>28</sup>, Ezek. 44<sup>15</sup>, 2 Chron. 29<sup>11</sup>). Their doing so *at nights* tells us the occasions on which this psalm, if it can be so called, was sung. The most important of the Jewish feasts was *Sukkôth* ("Tabernacles"), known as "the" feast; its outstanding character in post-exilic times comes out clearly in Zech. 14<sup>16-19</sup>, where it is said that in the Messianic times the nations "shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles. . . ." It was on the eve of each of the seven (later nine) days, as is to be gathered from the Mishnah (*Sukkôth* ii. 4, 9), that a service was held *at nights*, hence the plural. That it is unlikely to have been the Passover feast may be gathered from the fact that the night preceding the first day of this feast (14. Nisan, = April) was the time for the searching of leaven in the houses, and removing it, a ceremony known as *Bēdīqath ḥāmes* ("Removal of leaven"); for details see Mishnah, *Pesachim* i. 1. If night

services were held during this feast, the first night, the eve of the feast, would assuredly have been observed; but there is no mention of this as there is in the case of the feast of Tabernacles. The *lifting up of the hands* was the attitude in blessing (Lev. 9<sup>22</sup> in reference to Aaron, Eccclus. 50<sup>20</sup> in reference to the High-priest Simon I). The priests are called upon to *bless Yahweh*, in response to which they reply: *May Yahweh bless thee from Zion*; the mention of Zion is to recall the solemn truth that it was here that the divine presence rested (cp. Ps. 9<sup>11</sup>, 76<sup>2</sup>). Yahweh, though conceived of as dwelling in Zion, is nevertheless *Maker of heaven and earth* (cp. Ps. 115<sup>15</sup>), immanent everywhere, but specifically in his sanctuary.

### *Religious Teaching*

We have here a very instructive indication of the preparation for divine service on the part of God's ordained ministers. They upon whom devolved the high privilege of blessing the worshippers, utter a preparatory mutual blessing upon each other, and are thus endowed with spiritual power. Strengthened by the knowledge of this power having been conferred on them, they can undertake their sacred duties in the sanctuary in the conviction that they are acting under divine guidance, and imparting to others the blessing of which they themselves have been recipients.

### PSALM 135

ALTHOUGH the writer of this psalm makes considerable use of other psalms, and borrows from some other Biblical books, he has constructed it all into a logically arranged scheme of thought; the contention that "it has many glosses" is, we maintain, mistaken. The psalmist deliberately unites himself with those who had gone before him, by quoting their words, or by reiterating their thoughts; but he has composed a well-ordered and logical hymn of praise. Thus: it opens with an ascription of praise to Yahweh (1-4); this is appropriately followed by two outstanding reasons why praise should be offered to him—viz. he is the God of Nature (5-7), and he is the God of History (8-14); in contrast to this, the utter unreality of the gods of the nations, by whom the Jews were surrounded, is proclaimed (15-18); therefore a final exhortation to bless Yahweh fittingly closes the psalm. It will thus be seen that the psalm forms a well-thought-out unity.

That it was composed for use in the worship of the temple is obvious; and that it was sung antiphonally is also clear; but to assign the different parts to the respective singers is a somewhat precarious



proceeding, especially as it is impossible to say for certain which verses were sung by a solo voice, and which by the temple choir, and whether the whole congregation took any part in it. The question is, however, not of great importance.

With one exception (*v.* 17) the text has been well preserved; only a few slight emendations are called for.

The date of the psalm would seem to be late post-exilic; this is suggested by the indebtedness to other psalms, especially Ps. 115, which is clearly late post-exilic; and also by the form of the relative.

The question of metre offers some difficulty; where it is 3 : 3 there will be general agreement; but in *vv.* 5-7, 15-17 we have marked the metre as two beats to a line; most authorities would not allow two beats only to a line, but would take four of these as forming a 4 : 4 metre; it will, however, be seen that in neither of these two sections do we get the requisite parallelism. The two-beat line is very effective when a change of subject is introduced, as in this psalm. An occasional three-beat line is, in any case, often found, whether the metre is otherwise 4 : 4 or not.

### *Hallelujah.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Praise the name of Yahweh,               | praise, ye servants of Yahweh,                 |
| 2. Who stand in the house of Yahweh,        | in the courts of the house of our God.         |
| 3. Praise ° Yahweh °, for he is good, °     | sing-praise to his name, for it is beautiful;  |
| 4. For Jacob hath Yah chosen for himself,   | Israel for his peculiar-treasure.              |
| 5. For I do know                            |  |
| that greater is Yahweh,                     |  |
| our Lord, than all gods.                    |  |
| 6. All that he willed                       |  |
| hath Yahweh done,                           |  |
| in heaven and earth,                        |  |
| in the seas ° and in all ° deeps ;          |  |
| 7. He bringeth up mists                     |  |
| from the ends of the earth,                 |  |
| He maketh lightnings for the rain,          | ° he bringeth forth ° wind from his treasures. |
| 8. He smote the firstborn of Egypt,         | from man ° even unto ° beasts ;                |
| 9. He sent signs and wonders °              | against Pharaoh and all his servants ;         |
| 10. He smote great nations,                 | and slew mighty kings :                        |
| 11. Sihon, king of the Amorites,            | and Og, the king of Bashan,                    |
|   | And all the kingdoms of Canaan ;               |
| 12. And he gave their land for an heritage, | an heritage for Israel, his people.            |
| 13. " Yahweh, thy name is everlasting,      | Yahweh, thy remembrance is unending."          |
| 14. For Yahweh vindicateth his people,      | and hath compassion on all his servants,       |
| 15. The idols of the nations                |  |
| are silver and gold,                        |  |
| the work of the hands of men ;              |  |
| 16. mouths have they, but speak not,        |  |
| eyes have they, but see not,                |  |
| 17. ears have they, but hear not,           |  |
| noses ° have they, but smell not °.         |  |
| 18. Like them are they that make them,      | ° and all ° that trust in them.                |
| 19. House of Israel, bless Yahweh ;         | house of Aaron, bless Yahweh ;                 |
| 20. House of Levi, bless Yahweh ;           | fearers of Yahweh, bless Yahweh.               |
| 21. Blessed be Yahweh ° in Zion °,          | that dwelleth in Jerusalem °.                  |

## Text-critical Notes

3. Read יהוה "Yahweh" for יה "Yah", and delete, with S, יהוה at the end of the first half-line, for the sake of the rhythm. 6. Read וְיִבְרָכֶה for וְיִבְרָכֶה, "and all". 7. Read מוֹרֵי for מוֹרֵי, but see GK 530. 8. Read, with some MSS, עַד for עַד, "unto". 9. Om. בְּרִחוֹתַי מִצְרַיִם, "in thy midst, Egypt"; an unnecessary insertion which breaks the rhythm. 17. Read, as in Ps. 115<sup>9</sup>, לֹא, in place of the present Hebrew text: "neither is there any breath in their mouths"; the mouths have already been mentioned in the preceding verse. 18. Read וְכָל for כָּל, following some MSS. 21. Read מִצִּיּוֹן for מִצִּיּוֹן "from Zion". Om., with G, הַלְלוּהָ; it is the title of the following psalm.

1-4. Following, almost verbally, Ps. 113<sup>1</sup>, our psalm opens with an exhortation, sung probably by the High-priest, to priests and people, to *praise Yahweh*; they are collectively designated *servants of Yahweh*; but the two bodies are differentiated: they who *stand in the house of Yahweh* are the ministering priests (see Ps. 134<sup>1</sup>, and the note on that verse), while they who are gathered *in the courts of the house of our God*, are the body of the worshippers (cp. Ps. 92<sup>13, 14</sup>, 100<sup>3, 4</sup>, 116<sup>18, 19</sup>). *Praise* is due to him, for *he is good* (cp. Ps. 136<sup>1</sup>), and *his name is beautiful* (cp. Ps. 52<sup>9</sup>, 54<sup>6</sup>), and also because he *hath chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his peculiar treasure* (cp. Deut. 7<sup>6, 7</sup>, 14<sup>2</sup>, 26<sup>18</sup>); the expression *peculiar treasure*, means lit. a "possession" (cp. Mal. 3<sup>17</sup>); in 1 Chron. 29<sup>3</sup> it is used of a "treasure" of gold or silver. 5-7. As this section begins with the use of the first person, it may have been sung by one of the priests, but it is equally possible that it was sung by the temple choir, the "I" referring to each individual singer (and cp. "our Lord"), or even by the whole body of worshippers. That, however, is a minor matter; of far greater importance is the recognition of Yahweh as the God of Nature. The belief among other nations in the creative power of their gods, and of their being lords of nature, is here repudiated; *Yahweh is greater than all gods*; all that happens in the world of Nature is according to his will (cp. Ps. 115<sup>3</sup>), whether in the skies above, *heaven*, or on the *earth*, or beneath the earth (cp. Ps. 77<sup>17-19</sup>). Though *mists*, brought up *from the ends of the earth*, as it seemed when rising in the distance, were soon dispersed in Palestine with the rising sun, they were believed to portend rain on account of their coolness; moreover, according to an old-world belief, mists, dew, and rain were all connected with each other; in the *Book of Enoch* we read that the clouds of rain and the clouds of dew "and the clouds of the mist are connected, and the one gives to the other" (60<sup>20</sup>, cp. 41<sup>4</sup>). In Palestine rain is often accompanied by storm: *he maketh lightnings for the rain*. Finally, the *wind* which *he bringeth forth from his treasures*; here again we are reminded of the *Book of Enoch* 18<sup>1</sup>, where "the treasures of all the winds" are spoken of. With the verse before us, 7, cp. also Prov. 25<sup>14</sup>, Jer. 10<sup>13</sup>, 51<sup>16</sup>.

8-14. After having sung the praise of Yahweh as the God of Nature, wherein his power has been shown forth, the psalmist turns to the more restricted area of divine activity, and records how the history of Israel, in its most significant period—the formation of the nation and its settlement in Canaan—was effected by Yahweh as the God of History. With the details of this section it is not necessary to deal; it is largely based on Ps. 78<sup>43, 51, 55</sup>, and more especially on Ps. 136<sup>17-22</sup>, with which there are verbal similarities. 13 is quoted from Exod. 3<sup>15</sup>, and 14 from Deut. 32<sup>36</sup>, cp. Ps. 90<sup>13</sup>. In 15-18 the psalmist reverts in fuller detail to what he has said about the gods of the nations in 5; this comes in appropriately here, for he wishes to contrast with the omnipotence of Yahweh the empty uselessness of all so-called gods. This denunciation against idols may well have had a greater significance than appears at first in view of the fact that Hellenism had a great fascination for many Jews; the words of Hecataeus of Abdera, who lived at the end of the fourth century B.C. are of ominous import: "Under the later rule of the Persians, and of the Macedonians, who overthrew the empire of the former, many of the traditional customs of the Jews were altered owing to their intercourse with aliens".<sup>1</sup> This section is almost verbally the same as Ps. 115<sup>4-6, 8</sup>.

The final verses, 19-21, are based on Ps. 115<sup>9-11</sup> (see the notes there). The last verse (cp. Ps. 128<sup>5</sup>, 132<sup>13, 14</sup>) is held by some commentators to be a later addition, with insufficient reason. The "Hallelujah" at the end is, as the Septuagint shows, the title of the following psalm.

### *Religious Teaching*

The prophetic teaching concerning Yahweh as the God of Nature, and as the God of History, which is so marked an element in this psalm, has been referred to in the exegetical notes. Another matter concerning the doctrine of God is the monotheistic belief implied. The words: "Greater is Yahweh our Lord than all gods", would seem to imply a belief in other gods, however inferior to the one God; but these words must be read in the light of what is said in vv. 15-18; for the idols there spoken of are identical with gods, and they are described as non-existent. It may therefore be said that monotheistic belief, if not directly stated, is implied. Such pure monotheism is very rare in the psalms. It occurs in Ps. 115<sup>3-7</sup>, on which our psalm is based, and in Ps. 86<sup>9, 10</sup>; but elsewhere the existence of other gods is taken for granted. While, of course, Yahweh is conceived of as of a wholly different nature from any other god, yet, as a rule, the gods of the nations are not thought of as non-existent, as in this psalm.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs Grecs et Romains relatifs au Judaïsme*, p. 20 (1895).

## PSALM 136

As already pointed out (see p. 100), this psalm is known as the "Great Hallel" (*Hallel hā-Gadōl*) in the Talmud and other Rabbinical writings, reflecting, doubtless, earlier usage. Like Ps. 135, it contains many quotations from other psalms. Its form is unique in the Psalter; the first half of each verse was sung either by one of the priests, or perhaps by the Levitical choir; while the second half, taken from 2 Chron. 7<sup>3,6</sup>, was sung by the whole body of the worshippers. It will be noticed that in reading the first half of the verses alone we have a self-contained and independent psalm, the even flow of which is often interrupted by the refrain; this suggests that the refrain was not an original part of the psalm, especially as it occurs sometimes in a most inappropriate context (*vv.* 10, 15, 17-20). It was added for liturgical purposes.

The first three verses are an exhortation to give thanks to Yahweh, the reasons for which are then enumerated: for his creative works, for his having delivered his people from their Egyptian oppressors, for the settlement of the people in Canaan, for deliverance from other oppressors; and, finally, for the gift of food; this last seems to come in somewhat strangely after what has preceded it; but it is probably of great significance, for there is reason for believing that this psalm was sung at the New Year festival.

The psalm in its present form is doubtless late post-exilic in date, but it is possible that in its origin it belongs to far earlier times. It cannot be denied that the historic sections (*vv.* 10-15, 16-22, 23 and 24) are not altogether appropriate after the commemoration of the creative acts of Yahweh (*vv.* 1-9); we suggest, therefore, the possibility that the whole of the historical reminiscences were added later to the psalm.

That both the sun and the moon were regarded as fertility deities, and were worshipped in ancient Israel, is plainly intimated in the Old Testament; in later days their functions were ascribed to Yahweh, thanks to the teaching of the prophets. If, now, it be granted, for the sake of argument, that the historical sections of our psalm were later additions, *vv.* 25, 26 would come immediately after the mention of the creative acts of Yahweh: ". . . who made great lights, The sun to rule by day, The moon to rule by night; he giveth food to all flesh, Give thanks to the God of Heaven". In this case the appropriateness of the mention of food becomes evident, and the incongruity disappears. We suggest, therefore, that this psalm was one of those sung at the New Year festival. It has, according to ancient custom, always been, in the Jewish Church, one of the proper psalms for the feast of Passover,

the spring festival ; we should have expected it to have been one of the special psalms for the feast of Tabernacles (*Sukhôth*), in the autumn, when the New Year began ; but with the Exile, the Jews, following Babylonian usage, celebrated the New Year Festival both in the spring and in the autumn. With the reason of this double celebration we are not concerned here ; see Hooke, in *Myth and Ritual*, pp. 46 f., and the same writer's *The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual* (Schweich Lectures), pp. 51 ff. (1935).

The metre is 3 : 2, with the exception *vs.* 12, 15.

#### *Hallelujah.*

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good,            | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 2. Give thanks to the God of gods,                   | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 3. Give thanks to the Lord of lords,                 | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 4. Who alone doeth ° wonder-works,                   | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 5. Who made the heavens with wisdom,                 | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 6. Who spread forth the earth on the waters,         | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 7. Who made great lights,                            | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 8. The sun to rule by day,                           | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 9. The moon ° to rule ° by night,                    | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 10. Who smote Egypt in their firstborn,              | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 11. And brought out Israel from their midst,         | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 12. With mighty hand and outstretched arm,           | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 13. Who cut Yam-sûph in twain,                       | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 14. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it, | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 15. And cast Pharaoh and his host into Yam-sûph,     | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 16. Who led his people into the wilderness,          | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 17. Who smote great ° nations °,                     | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 18. And slew famous kings,                           | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 19. Sihon, king of the Amorites,                     | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 20. And Og, the king of Bashan,                      | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 21. And gave their land for an heritage,             | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 22. An heritage to Israel, his servant ;             | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 23. Who in our abasement remembered us,              | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 24. And rescued us from our oppressors,              | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 25. He giveth food to all flesh.                     | for his mercy endureth for ever, |
| 26. Give thanks to the God of heaven,                | for his mercy endureth for ever. |

#### *Text-critical Notes*

*Title:* add הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, "Hallelujah", from the end of the preceding psalm.  
 4. Om. גְּדֹלוֹת "great", cp. Ps. 72<sup>18</sup>. 9. Om. וְכִנּוּכֵם for the rhythm's sake ; and read, following the Versions, לְמַמְשָׁלָתָם for לְמַמְשָׁלוֹת, plur. 17. Read, with Gressmann and Gunkel, לְאֵמִים for מְלָכִים, "kings", which comes in the following verse.

1-3. The opening word of each of these verses, *Hôdû* ("Give thanks"), is the same as in Pss. 105-107, 118, hence they are called "*Hôdû*-psalms" in Rabbinical writings. We have rendered the refrain in its familiar English form, but in its Hebrew form there is no verb, it is simply : "for his mercy (is) for ever" ; and *hesed* ("mercy"), as we have remarked elsewhere, connotes more than mercy : it means

"love" in its varied forms. For the expressions *God of gods, Lord of lords*, cp. Deut. 10<sup>17</sup>.

4-9. The first of the reasons for which praise is to be given to Yahweh is because of the *wonder-works* of creation; *he made the heavens with wisdom*, lit. "understanding" or "discernment" (cp. Jer. 10<sup>12</sup>), presumably in reference to the divine forethought that man would need *the sun and the moon* (cp. Gen. 1<sup>14-17</sup>). Another quaint idea is expressed in the words *who spread forth the earth on the waters*; this is a somewhat different conception of the creation of the earth from that of Gen. 1<sup>9</sup>, but is in accordance with Babylonian stories of Creation.<sup>1</sup> 10-15. The psalmist then gives a further reason for thankfulness to Yahweh by recalling the circumstances connected with the deliverance from Egypt; the smiting of the *firstborn in Egypt* (cp. Ps. 78<sup>51</sup>, 135<sup>8</sup>) was what actually induced the Pharaoh to release the Israelites (Exod. 12<sup>29-33</sup>), and was ascribed directly to Yahweh with his *mighty hand and outstretched arm*; the phrase is taken from Deut. 4<sup>34</sup>, Jer. 32<sup>21</sup>. In speaking of the dividing of the *Yam-sûph*, "the sea of reeds" (usually, but erroneously, rendered the Red Sea, it was the eastern arm of the Red Sea, now known as the Aelanitic gulf), the psalmist uses a curious, but expressive, term never elsewhere used in this connexion; it is lit. "he cut into cuttings", or "portions"; in Gen. 15<sup>17</sup> the noun is used of the two halves of a sacrificed animal between which the two parties of a covenant passed. This covenant-rite, of great antiquity, must have been in the mind of the psalmist. In 16-22, with which cp. Ps. 78<sup>52-55</sup>, 135<sup>10-21</sup>, yet further causes for thankfulness are enumerated; the first is that Yahweh led his people into the wilderness; this was not always thought of as something to be thankful for (cp. Deut. 32<sup>10</sup>, Jer. 2<sup>6</sup>, Hos. 13<sup>5</sup>); then the overthrow of Canaanite kings; and, thirdly, the giving of the *land* of Canaan for *an heritage to Israel* (cp. Am. 2<sup>10</sup>). Once more, in 23, 24 the psalmist recalls periods of oppression through which his people had passed, thinking of the Philistines, Aramæans, Assyrians, and perhaps chiefly of the Exile, out of all of which Yahweh had delivered them; for all these mercies gratitude to Yahweh is called for. And, lastly, in 25, 26, the psalmist mentions as a cause for thankfulness the fact that Yahweh *giveth food to all flesh* (cp. Ps. 104<sup>27, 28</sup>, 145<sup>15, 16</sup>) therefore: *Give thanks to the God of Heaven*; see further on this the introductory section. The expression "the God of Heaven" does not occur in the older literature; it is used several times in the book of *Ezra* and also in that of *Daniel*; its origin is possibly Persian, and if so, it is in itself ancient.

<sup>1</sup> See Gunkel's translation in *Schöpfung und Chaos* . . ., p. 420 (1895).

*Religious Teaching*

This centres in two aspects of the doctrine of God: his creative acts, and his guidance of the early history of Israel to the time of their becoming a nation. Of particular importance is the stress laid on the due recognition of divine mercies uttered in the refrain "for his mercy endureth for ever"; the expression of national gratitude for divine mercies in the past, which have led to those of the present, is an element in various other psalms too. This has always been characteristic of Jewish worship. Thus, while the personal relationship to God is never lost sight of, the divine solicitude for the nation as a whole is also duly recognized. That is an element in worship which is of profound significance.

## PSALM 137

THIS psalm is, in character, unique in the Psalter. Short as it is, it presents some points of difficulty concerning which there are, not without reason, differences of opinion among commentators. The difficulties will be dealt with in the exegetical notes. Here it will suffice to express the belief that the psalm was written by one of the exiles who returned from Babylon in 538 B.C., and that he records one of his experiences while in exile. As Jerusalem was the most obvious objective for the returned exiles, it would be in this city that the psalmist wrote his psalm, though some commentators think that *vv.* 5, 6 imply that the writer was not in Jerusalem; the words against Edom suggest the psalmist's presence at any rate in Palestine, where he would be more forcibly reminded of the hated people, rather than somewhere in the Dispersion.

As an ancient folk-song this psalm was in later days incorporated in the great national collection; but that it was ever used liturgically in the worship of the temple may well be doubted. It is not used in the worship of the Synagogue. On the metre *cp.* what has been said regarding that of Ps. 135.

- |    |  |                                   |
|----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | By the waters of Babylon,<br>There we sat and wept,<br>When we remembered Zion.  |                                   |
| 2. | On the willows in the midst thereof<br>We hanged up our harps,   |                                   |
| 3. | For there our captors asked of us<br>Words of song,<br>° And our plunderers °, mirth :<br>" Sing to us<br>° Of the songs ° of Zion." |                                   |
| 4. | How should we sing Yahweh-songs  | in a foreign land ?               |
| 5. | If I forget thee, Jerusalem,   | may my right-hand ° fail ° (me) ; |

6. May my tongue cleave to my palate, if I remember thee not,  
If I exalt not Jerusalem above my greatest joy.
7. Remember, Yahweh,  
the sons of Edom—  
the day of Jerusalem !  
Who said : " Rase ° it, rase it to its very foundation."
8. O daughter of Babylon, ° thou  
devastater °, blessed he that requiteth thee, °
9. Blessed he that seizeth, and dasheth thy little ones against the rock !

## Text-critical Notes

*Title:* G has "David's". 3. Read, cp. GS and especially the Targum, וְשׁוֹלֵלֵינוּ for וְרַחֲלֵינוּ, lit. "and that cause us to howl". Read, GV, מְשִׁירִי for מְשִׁיר, sing. 5. Read, with Cheyne and Gunkel, תִּבְחֶנּוּ (cp. Job 3<sup>17</sup>, Hos. 9<sup>8</sup>, Hab. 3<sup>17</sup>) for תִּשְׁכַּח, "may . . . forget". 7. For the imperat. form עָרַר see GK 75cc. 8. Read, מְשִׁירָה for מְשִׁירָה, "the devastated, see exeg. note. Om. אֲרֵר-גְּמוּלָתָךְ שְׁנֵי מַלְאָכֶיךָ, "thy dealing which thou didst deal to us".

1. The psalmist begins abruptly by placing the *mise en scène* before his readers without any words of introduction. He has, according to our interpretation of the psalm, just returned with his fellow-exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. In the decree of Cyrus permitting the return of the Jews, as recorded in Ezra 1<sup>2-4</sup>, it is said: ". . . Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel; he is God, which is in Jerusalem. . . ." The fourfold mention of Jerusalem in the short *résumé* of the decree (see also 2<sup>1</sup>) shows that Palestine, and primarily Jerusalem, was what the exiles yearned for. Thither, therefore, our psalmist came, and described to his compatriots who had not been in exile something of his experiences in Babylon. On one occasion he had, with some of his fellow-exiles, been resting *by the waters of Babylon*; and as they thought of their far-away home, and of *Zion*, the national centre of worship, which it had never yet been their lot to behold, they were filled with grief, and *wept*. In his description of Babylon, Herodotus tells us, among other things, that there was "a moat, deep, wide, and full of water, which runs entirely round it. . . . And the city consists of two divisions, for a river, called the Euphrates, separates it in the middle; this river is broad, deep, and rapid. The wall on either bank has an elbow carried down to the river." He tells us, further, that all the streets lead to the river, and that at the end of each street "a little gate is formed in the wall along the river-side . . . they are all made of brass, and lead down to the edge of the river". He also speaks of a landing-place and seats to rest on, on which those who go there sit down and rest themselves (1<sup>178-181</sup>). These few details fully explain the allusion to *the waters of Babylon* in our psalm.

2, 3. Along the banks of the river running through Babylon willows grew (see the interesting illustration of this in Meissner's *Babylonien und*



*Assyrien* i. No. 108 [1924]; cp. also Isa. 44<sup>4</sup>, "willows by the water-courses"); to these the psalmist alludes; he and a few of his fellow-exiles had, it would seem, been singing some of the sacred songs their fathers in exile had taught them, with the accompaniment of those harps which the first exiles had brought with them. But while they were singing they saw some of their *captors* approaching; at once they ceased their singing, and hung their harps on the willows to show that they had no intention of singing in the presence of their hated enemies. Thereupon these Babylonians, perhaps out of mere curiosity, asked them to sing *words of song* (for the expression see the title of Ps. 18); it never entered their minds that the exiles had been singing sacred songs; the harps (the *kinnor*) were the small kind, distinct from the larger *nebel* (cp. Ps. 33<sup>2</sup>, 144<sup>9</sup>), and were used for accompanying secular, as well as sacred, songs (cp. Isa. 5<sup>12</sup>); so these *plunderers* (in reference to the plundering of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army, 2 Kgs. 25<sup>8-10</sup>) thought that the exiles had been singing songs of *mirth*, and asked the exiles to continue their singing: *Sing to us (some) of the songs of Zion*; they little realized what those *songs of Zion* really were. 4, 6. The indignation of our psalmist can be readily understood; as though the sacred songs sung in honour of Yahweh could be sung before Gentiles *in a foreign land*! To do this would be to forget the sanctity of Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of Yahweh; and the psalmist threatens himself with a curse: *If I forget thee, Jerusalem, may my right-hand fail (me)*; this emendation of the text ("fail" for "forget", the words are very similar in Hebrew, see critical note) is justified, for the Hebrew verb for "forget" is never used in such an incongruous connexion, whereas the "failing" of the hand to do its part in using the harp, which accompanied the sacred song, would be to mark the worshipper as incapable of fulfilling his proper part in worship—*i.e.*, as failing in his duty to God; it was as bad, for it involved the same incapacity for true worship—as if his *tongue* were to *cleave to his palate* so that he could not utter words of praise and thanksgiving. Such a curse the psalmist calls down upon himself if he should *remember not* the city of his God, if he should not *exalt Jerusalem above his greatest joy*. 7, 9. The language is exaggerative, and reveals the passionate character of the psalmist; he was intensely human; and this is further brought out by the frank and unabashed way in which, immediately after his expression of religious fervour, the spirit of bitter revenge asserts itself. The one excuse is that he regards the enemies of his people as being also the enemies of his God. The sudden turn of thought from the surroundings he was envisaging to that of the enemy nearer home (Edom) can be explained only by remembering that he was now for the first time in Palestine, in Jerusalem. He had been taught how, when Jerusalem had been surrounded by the Babylonian army, Edom, the near neigh-

bours of his people, their "brother" (Am. 1<sup>11</sup>) had sided with the enemies of Judah; "in that day when thou wast present (lit. when thou didst stand in front), in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them"; thus does the prophet Obadiah (v. 11) speak of the action of the Edomites at that time. And the psalmist, in bitter wrath, cries: *Remember, Yahweh, the sons of Edom—the day of Jerusalem—i.e., the day of visitation*, cp. Isa. 9<sup>4</sup>, Jer. 50<sup>27-31</sup>, *who said, Rase it, rase it, to its very foundation*. Then he reverts to his main subject; *O daughter of Babylon*, he says, lit. "O daughter Babylon", addressing the city as a young woman (similarly in Isa. 47<sup>1</sup> and the "daughter Zion" in Isa. 1<sup>8</sup>), *the devastater*; the emendation is needed, for the corrupt Hebrew text, "the devastated", would imply that Babylon had already fallen; whereas the verbs are all in the future tense; and, in any case, Babylon was not devastated when conquered by Cyrus; both the "Nabonidus Chronicle" and the "Cyrus Cylinder" show that he treated the city with great consideration. When the psalmist describes Babylon as *thou devastater*, he is referring to the devastation of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. He speaks of him *that requiteth thee as blessed*; the word, which is used in the sense of "happy" or "fortunate", has here, doubtless, as often elsewhere, a religious meaning, "blessed" of Yahweh; that the term should be used in reference to one who would take vengeance on the enemy of God's people, and therefore of God himself, is comprehensible; but that it should be applied also to one who would *seize the little children and dash them against the rock*, is unpardonable; true, such cruelty was common enough (2 Kgs. 8<sup>12</sup>, Isa. 13<sup>16</sup>, Hos. 13<sup>16</sup> (14<sup>1</sup>), Nah. 3<sup>10</sup>) in those days; but the perpetrators are never called "blessed". The psalmist here gives way to human passion, which is to be deplored; that is all that can be said.

### *Religious Teaching*

The clash of emotions expressed in this psalm reveal human nature at its best and at its worst. Sorrow at the thought of being hindered from singing the praises of God in the sanctuary where his presence rested was the outcome of deep devotion to him, and reveals a heart imbued with all that is best. In contrast to this there is the outrage on religion which calls down a blessing on the atrocious wretch who should dash innocent little children against the rock because they happened to be born in Babylon. While then, on the one hand, the religious teaching in the psalm sets forth a spirit of true devotion, this is marred, on the other hand, by approval of action which is a disgrace to human nature. Let it, however, be remembered that though the *lex talionis* was a

recognized law, it was never intended to be carried out to the extent exhibited in this psalm. The writer was a man of passionate feelings, and among even the best of those with a temperament like that, evil will at times preponderate. The dominant note, however, of the psalm is a truly religious one, and witnesses to the loyalty of those who, in the land of their captivity, were surrounded by subtle temptations, but who withstood them in the strength of that loyalty.

## PSALM 138

OUR interpretation of this psalm differs from that of other commentators, but we hope that the exegetical notes will show that there is some justification for the view here presented. That there should be nearly a dozen points of contact, either of thought or word, between this short psalm and the writings of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 40-55), in which the conditions of the times depicted would seem to be identical, is an argument in favour of the view here advocated that the psalmist wrote during the last months of the Exile. The ascription of the psalm to Zechariah in the title of two important Septuagint texts may reflect a tradition which is not so far from the truth as is often supposed; and its close proximity to such a psalm as the preceding may have some significance. Not that we mean to imply that the prophet Zechariah was the author of the psalm; but the tradition which connects his name with it presupposes a date near that to which we assign it.

There is some uncertainty about the metre, but for the most part it is 3 : 3.

*David's.*

1. ° Yahweh °, I give thanks to thee with  
all my heart,
  2. I worship toward thy holy temple,
  3. In the day that I called thou didst  
answer me,
  4. All the kings of the earth, may they  
confess to thee,
  5. ° May they meditate ° upon the ways of  
Yahweh,
  - 6.
  7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
  - 8.
- before the gods do I sing praise to thee.  
 and give thanks to thy name for thy  
 love, °  
 ° thy name over all °.  
 ° didst increase ° strength in my soul.  
 for they have heard the words of thy  
 mouth,  
 for great is the glory of Yahweh ;  
 Exalted is Yahweh,  
 yet he considereth the lowly,  
 But the haughty he knoweth from afar.  
 Thou stretchest forth thine hand,  
 thy right-hand doth save me.  
 thou preservest me against the wrath of  
 mine enemies,  
 Yahweh will accomplish it for me,  
 Yahweh's love is everlasting,  
 Forsake not ° the work of ° thine hands.

## Text-critical Notes

**Title :** G (Cod. A) adds ζαχαριου. 1. Add, with some Hebr. MSS and the Versions, יהוה "Yahweh". 2. Om. וְעַל-אִמְרֶיךָ "and for thy word", for the rhythm's sake. Read שְׁמֶיךָ עַל-כֻּל־שְׁמֶיךָ for עַל-כֻּל־שְׁמֶיךָ "over all thy name", and om. אִמְרֶיךָ. 3. Read וְתִרְבֶּה for תִּרְבֶּה, "thou didst make me wide". 5. Read (Oxf. Hebr. Lex.) וְשִׁירוּ for וְשִׁירֵי, "may they sing", cp. Ps. 105<sup>3</sup>. Read, with many Hebr. MSS מַעֲשֵׂי for מַעֲשֵׂי "the works of".

1. In the depths of his gratitude the psalmist not only *gives thanks to Yahweh with all his heart*, but he feels that he must also *praise* him in the presence of other gods. We have here, thus, the frank recognition of the existence of other gods; and the psalmist, in order to show his belief in the superiority of Yahweh, praises him *before them*. This raises the questions as to what gods the psalmist was referring, and as to how he came to be in their presence, so that he might, as it were, mock them by praising Yahweh before them. Preliminary to these questions there is, however, another: what was this dire trouble from which the psalmist thanks God that he has been delivered, and can yet say: *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou preservest me against the wrath of mine enemies?* How can he give thanks for deliverance while still surrounded by danger? These questions, together with one or two others which arise on reading through the psalm, are, we maintain, easily answered when once it is realized when and where the psalm was written.

The psalmist was living in the year 538 B.C., in Babylon, among the Jewish exiles there; for some of these exiles life was, no doubt, bearable; but not for the mass; our psalmist was among those of whom the great prophet of the Exile spoke: "They are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore" (Isa. 42<sup>22</sup>). What must have been the feelings of these unhappy captives when they heard from the mouth of that self-same prophet the words spoken in the name of Yahweh, their God: "I have raised up one from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name; and he shall come upon the rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay"? But more; of Cyrus, this conqueror of their oppressors, the prophet, speaking again in the name of Yahweh, says: "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44<sup>28</sup>). Then, very soon after, came the conqueror's decree concerning the Jewish captives: "All the kingdoms of the earth hath Yahweh, the God of Heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, Yahweh his God be

with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel; he is God, which is in Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 36<sup>22, 23</sup>, Ezra 1<sup>2, 3</sup>). Truly there was every reason for the inspired psalmist among the captive exiles to *give thanks to Yahweh with all his heart*. He had been living among the Babylonians and seen them worshipping their gods; many among his fellow-exiles worshipped them too (Isa. 42<sup>17</sup>); but he was not one of them; nevertheless, he believed that they really existed—naturally enough, when he saw the powerful and cultured Babylonians offering them their worship. So, to give vent to his feelings of gratitude to Yahweh for deliverance now assured, he goes into one of the temples, and *before the gods* there gives praise to Yahweh, witnessing to his belief that his God was far superior to them.

2. Then the psalmist speaks of his accustomed worship; this, in accordance with the custom of the devout Jew when distant from his own land, is offered while looking in the direction of the temple,<sup>1</sup> *toward thy holy temple* (cp. 1 Kgs. 8<sup>48</sup>, Dan. 6<sup>9</sup>, Tob. 3<sup>11, 12</sup>, Jer. Talm. *Berakhoth* iv. 5, has "towards the holy land"); *he giveth thanks* for the *love* which Yahweh has shown forth to his people, by *magnifying his name, i.e.*, showing his supreme power, *over all* (cp. the words in the decree of Cyrus: "All the kingdoms of the earth hath Yahweh, the God of heaven, given me").

3. That the exiles had constantly offered up prayers for deliverance from their captivity needs no insisting on (cp. Isa. 49<sup>8</sup>); many of them must have been like our psalmist who prayed in faith, and whose faith, in answer to prayer was strengthened: *In the day that I called thou didst answer me, didst increase strength in my soul*; we are reminded of Isa. 40<sup>29</sup>: "He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength", words which, as Duhm rightly insists, are to be understood in a spiritual sense (*Das Buch Jesaia*, in loc).

4, 5. From thoughts of the past the psalmist returns to the present; deliverance has come because Yahweh of his mercy had raised up Cyrus, his anointed, to subdue nations and loose the loins of kings—*i.e.*, their cincture to which their weapons were attached (Isa. 45<sup>1</sup>); in his deep gratitude to Yahweh he expresses the devout wish that *all these kings of the earth may confess to him*, to his honour and glory. In saying that *they have heard the words of thy mouth*, he is referring to the words in the Cyrus decree, where it is said that Yahweh "hath charged me to build an house in Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 36<sup>23</sup>). It will, of course, be understood that this form of the decree is to some extent modified in accordance with Jewish ideas. *May they meditate upon the ways of*

<sup>1</sup> For the proof that the temple, though in a dilapidated condition, was used for worship during the whole of the exilic period, see Oesterley and Robinson, *A History of Israel*, ii. 91-94 (1934).

*Yahweh*, continues the psalmist, thinking perhaps of the prophet's words, speaking in the name of *Yahweh*, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith *Yahweh*. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55<sup>8, 9</sup>). In envisaging the conversion of the Gentile kings to belief in *Yahweh*, the psalmist may well have been influenced by the prophet's words: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall worship; because of *Yahweh* that is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee" (Isa. 49<sup>7</sup>). *Exalted as Yahweh is*, he takes due note of *the lowly*; as this is said in close connexion with the *kings of the earth*, it is not fanciful to see again an allusion to the great exilic prophet, who spoke of the lowliness of kings in ministering to and honouring the people of *Yahweh*: "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet" (Isa. 49<sup>23</sup>). 7, 8. As already pointed out, we hold that this psalm was written by one of the exiles after the decree of Cyrus had gone forth; the prospect of going to Jerusalem was what called forth the psalmist's thanksgiving. But for the moment the people were still captives. The bitterness of the defeated Babylonians can easily be conceived; that they should vent their wrath on the despised Jewish captives was natural enough; from what the prophet says in words addressed to Babylon it is clear that the Jews had often been maltreated: "Thou didst show them no mercy; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke" (Isa. 47<sup>6</sup>). And now the captives were to go free, while the Babylonians were the slaves of their Persian conqueror; human nature being what it is, it cannot cause surprise that the Babylonians seized their last opportunity of showing their contempt for the Jews in drastic ways. And the psalmist was one of the victims of their rancour; but he knows that God will protect him: *though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou preservest me against the wrath of mine enemies . . .*; he knows that *Yahweh's* purpose will be *accomplished* both for himself and for his fellow-exiles, for *Yahweh's love (hesed) is everlasting*, he will *not forsake*, leave undone, the great *work* of release from captivity to which he has put *his hands*. Once more we see how our psalmist was influenced both in thought and word by his great contemporary: "Thus saith *Yahweh*, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask of me the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me . . . I have raised him up (*i.e.*, Cyrus) in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways; he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith *Yahweh* of hosts" (Isa. 45<sup>11-13</sup>). This was *the work of thine hands*; we can understand why many of the MSS. have "works"!

PSALM 139

*For the Precentor: David's. A Psalm.*

1. Yahweh, thou searchest me out, and knowest me ;  
 2. ° Thou ° knowest my downsitting and thou discernest ° my thoughts ° from  
     mine uprising,                          afar ;  
 3. My going and my resting thou dost  
     sift,    art familiar with all my ways ;  
 4. For no word is there on my tongue, lo, Yahweh, thou knowest it altogether ;
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5. Behind and before thou dost encircle me,  
 6. Too wonderful for me is ° that ° knowledge,  
 7. Whither should I go from thy spirit,  
 8. If I ascended to heaven—thou art there,  
 9. If I took the wings of the dawn,  
 10. Even there would thy hand ° rest upon me °,  
 11. If I said °, “Surely darkness ° will cover me °,”  
 12. Yea, darkness would not darken from thee,  
 13. For thou didst form my reins,  
 14. I thank thee, for ° thou art awe-ful, °
- And my soul knoweth it right well.
15. Not hidden was my frame from thee  
 16. ° My doings ° did thine eyes behold,  
 17. ° All my days were numbered °,  
 18. How inscrutable to me are thy thoughts,  
 19. Would I count them, they would outnumber the sand,  
 20. O God, that thou wouldest slay the wicked,  
 21. That speak of thee in wickedness,  
 22. Do I not hate them that hate thee °,  
 23. With utter hatred do I hate them,  
 24. And see if ° a grievous word ° be in me,
- Search me, O God,  
 And know my heart,  
 Try me, and know my thoughts,
- and layest thine hand upon me.  
 too high, I cannot (attain) unto it.  
 whither should I flee from thy presence ?  
 if I ° descended ° to Sheol, lo, thou art there,  
 or abode in the farthest sea,  
 and thy right-hand take hold of me ;  
 and night be ° a veil ° about me °,  
 and night like day would give light ! °  
 didst knit me together in my mother's womb ;  
 ° thou art wonderful °,—wonderful are thy works ;  
 at the time I was fashioned in secret ;  
 the depths of the earth,  
 in thy book ° my ways ° are inscribed :  
 ° and not one was overlooked °.  
 O God, how great is their number ;  
 ° did I finish °, ° I should still be counting °.  
 that the bloodthirsty men ° might depart °,  
 ° they take ° ° thy name ° in vain ;  
 and loathe them ° that loathe thee ! °  
 as enemies are they to me.
- and lead me in the way of ° peace °.

### Text-critical Notes

2. Om. *אָתָּה*, emphatic “thou”. Read *לְרַעִי* for *לְרַעִי*, “my thought”, cp. v. 17. 6. Read with S, *יָצַרְתָּ לְהַדְרִיעַ* for *יָצַרְתָּ*. 8. Read, GS, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*. 10. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*. “would lead me”, as a better parallel to “take hold of”. 11. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*. Read, with most modern commentators, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* (= “will crush me”). Read, with Wutz, *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “light”. 19. Om. *כְּחֹשֶׁךְ כְּאוֹר*, “like darkness like light”, which overloads the line, and is probably a marginal comment which has got into the text. 14. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “fearful things”. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “I am wonderful”. 16. Read, with Gunkel, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “mine embryo”. Read, with Wutz, *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “all of them”. Read, with Wutz, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* (aram. *וְאֵלֵינוּ*) for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “days will be formed”. Read, With Wutz, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* (niph. *וְאֵלֵינוּ*) for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “and not one among them”. 18. Read, with Gunkel, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “I awake”. Read, with Wutz, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* (Neo-Hebr.) for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “I should still be with thee”. 19. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*. 20. Read, GS, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “thy cities”. 21. Om. *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for rhythm's sake. Read, with Gunkel, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*. 24. Read, with Gunkel, *וְאֵלֵינוּ* (cp. Prov. xv. i) for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “a way of toil”. Read *וְאֵלֵינוּ* for *וְאֵלֵינוּ*, “everlasting”.

1-6. What the psalmist here says of the omniscience of God in respect of himself personally would, of course, apply to all men, as he, doubtless, would have been the first to recognize; but it is *personal*



apprehension and experience which must first find expression. That he was far in advance of most of his contemporaries in his conception of God goes without saying, for we have here the conviction of a contemplative mind which had attained to a knowledge of God beyond anything that had heretofore existed in Israel. When we ask whence this new insight into the divine nature was derived, the answer is twofold: it came partly through the development of the teaching of such a prophet as Deutero-Isaiah (see, *e.g.*, such passages as Isa. 40<sup>13, 14, 28, 43</sup><sup>1-3, 13</sup>, 44<sup>1, 2, 24</sup>, 46<sup>3, 4</sup>, 48<sup>12, 13</sup>, 49<sup>15</sup>), but still more through the direct communion between the Divine Spirit and the mind of one who, in holy self-abandonment, had waited expectantly for inspiration. Such a one realizes that God has sounded the depths of his being; he knows that he is known: *thou dost search me out, and thou knowest me*. Even the most ordinary concerns of life are noted; every purpose and intention, even such trifles as physical fatigue which demands rest, or the effort of rising to carry out the duties of the daily round, *downsitting* and *uprising*, all is known to God who discerns the thoughts which prompt every action, though *from afar*, as it seems to man's bounded mental horizon. It is an expressive term which the psalmist uses in describing the divine weighing of motives, *thou dost sift my going and my resting*; just as the farmer winnows his corn, dividing the wheat from the chaff, so does God estimate what is of value and what is worthless, for He is *familiar with all the ways of man*; not a *word* on the *tongue*, but he knows its purport. Truly touching is the psalmist's certitude of God's nearness to him in his walk through life; protection *behind*, a guide *before*; like a rampart round a city *thou dost encircle me*; that is the force of the expression used (cp. Isa. 29<sup>3</sup>); and, lest harm should come, *thou layest thine hand upon me*. Overwhelmed by the all-knowledge of God concerning his every thought and movement, the psalmist cries in ecstasy: *Too wonderful is that knowledge for me*; it is beyond his apprehension, *too high*, he *cannot attain unto it*!

7-12. So far the psalmist has spoken of God's knowledge of all his thoughts, words, and acts—and he is but one among the countless multitudes to whom the same applies. The thought of this divine omniscience leads him to the contemplation of what necessarily follows: God's omnipresence. And again it is, naturally, his individual relationship with God of which he speaks, though implying its universal application. There is no spot in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, in which God is not present. The stress which the psalmist lays on the Personality of God shows that he is far from holding any pantheistic conception, after the manner of Greek speculation; to him (to use modern expressions) divine transcendence and divine immanence centre in Divine Personality. In question-form he asks: *Whither should I go from thy spirit, whither should I flee from thy presence?* Not

that he could ever wish to; it is his impressive way of presenting the fact of the ubiquity of the Divine Spirit. The psalmist then sets forth four suppositions, none of which, however, does he conceive to be possible of accomplishment in his earthly existence; they are intended to express the truth that God is everywhere. The two most widely separated places possible to imagine are *Heaven* and *Sheol*; yet, could he, conceivably, penetrate to either, God would be there: *If I ascended to heaven—thou art there, if I descended to Sheol, lo, thou art there*, cp. Am. 9<sup>2</sup>. The thought of God's presence in *Sheol* is of profound significance; the normal belief is expressed several times in the *Psalms*, according to which God is unconcerned with those who go down to *Sheol*; he does not remember them, they are cut off from his hand (88<sup>5, 10-12</sup>, cp. 30<sup>9</sup>); this clearly implies that there is no relationship between God and those who are in *Sheol*—i.e., the departed. But the thought of his presence there, presented by our psalmist, necessarily postulates a developed conception regarding the Hereafter. The importance of the psalm from this point of view must be recognized. There are but few psalms in which this fuller belief in life hereafter is expressed (cp. Ps. 73); and it is the developed conception of the Divine Personality which inspires and necessitates that belief.

After his thought of the divine presence in the two most widely separated places beyond the compass of the earth, the psalmist refers to what he conceives to be the farthest limits of the earth itself: *If I took the wings of the dawn*; here he uses a picture taken from Greek mythology; Eōs, the Greek goddess of the dawn, had white wings, and flew from the Eastern Ocean, illuminating the sky with red glory. *The farthest sea* is the extreme west. If he took the wings of the dawn, and flew from one end of the earth to the other, here, too, would God be present, his *hand would rest upon* his servant, his *right-hand would take hold of* him (cp. Job 38<sup>12, 13, 16-20</sup>, and for the *dawn* cp. also Job 41<sup>18 (10)</sup>). Finally, the psalmist pictures himself as enveloped in darkness—surely that must, from its impenetrability, hide from God's presence; but with God there is no such thing as darkness, *it would not darken from him*.

13-18. There are good grounds for the contention (Gunkel) that the first two half-lines of v. 14 originally preceded 13; we should only like to add that 14<sup>c</sup> should be included. The whole verse, 14, forms an introduction to what follows (13, 15<sup>ab</sup>, and 15<sup>c</sup> 16). There is here a distinct difficulty in deciding how these verses should be divided; and we recognize the differences of opinion on the subject. The new subject begins with an expression of thanksgiving for the marvels of God's works: *I thank thee, for thou art awe-ful*; we use this expression for the want of a better one; the word means "fearsome, awe-inspiring"; and it is because God is *wonderful* that the psalmist is

struck with reverential wonder in contemplating his works, and is filled with thankfulness that God is such as He is ; the Hebrew word is used both of giving thanks and of giving praise. In saying, *and my soul knoweth it right well*, the psalmist shows that he has thought deeply on these wonders ; and then he proceeds to mention two of them which touch him most closely. First, the gradual formation of his body in the womb, which he conceives of as divinely directed : the *reins*—i.e., the kidneys—believed to be the seat of the emotions and affections (cp. Ps. 16<sup>7</sup>, 73<sup>21</sup>), and then the *knitting together* of his bodily frame ; the same thought occurs in Job 10<sup>11</sup> : “Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews”. So that his *frame was not hidden from God at the time he was fashioned in secret*. And then the psalmist gives expression to an old-world and widespread belief that, prior to its entry into the womb, the human body has been *skilfully wrought in the depths of the earth*. This belief in the pre-existence of the body may have come to the Jews from Zoroastrianism (see, e.g., *Bund.* i. 8) ; though very different from the belief in the pre-existence of the soul, this latter is but a refined form of the other. But the whole subject is too large a one to enter into here. It is another ancient belief to which the psalmist refers when he speaks of God’s *book* in which all his *ways are inscribed*, “ways” meaning manner of life ; not only so, but *all his days of life are numbered*, *not one* has been *overlooked* by God. This is, in effect, a belief in predestination. All these things the psalmist mentions in order to place on record his realization of the fact that the thoughts of God are as unfathomable as they are numerous : *How inscrutable to me are thy thoughts, O God, how great is their number*.

19–22. In view of the sublime conceptions regarding the nature of the Divine Personality which the psalmist has expressed, the wrathful words which he now utters need not cause surprise. That there should be men who deliberately set themselves by act and word against God who is so immeasurably great, so inconceivably exalted beyond the capacity of human apprehension, fills the psalmist with righteous indignation. Such men, who even dare to *speak* of God in *wickedness*, and *take His name in vain* are not fit to live : *O God, that thou wouldest slay the wicked, that the bloodthirsty men might depart*. The psalmist cannot do other than *hate them*, for they *hate* God ; as the *enemies* of God, they are his *enemies* too. 23, 24. After this justifiable outburst, the psalmist, in humble piety, prays that God, who *knows his heart*, will root out all that is wrong, and thus lead him in the *way of peace* (for this phrase cp. Isa. 59<sup>9</sup>).

The religious teaching of the psalm has been sufficiently indicated in what has been said in the exegetical notes. See further the *Religious Teaching* section under Ps. 73.

## PSALM 140

THERE are expressions in this psalm which support the contention that it reflects the bitterness of party strife among the Jews. Unfair, dishonourable, even violent, methods have but too frequently characterized the waging of feuds within a community. There is nothing to show that the psalmist's antagonists were Gentiles; had that been the case, some indication of the fact would have found expression. The outstanding instances of feud among the Jews, or those closely connected with them racially in post-exilic times, were (1) the Samaritan schism, and (2) the divisions which ultimately issued in the formation of the Sadducæan and Pharisaic parties; though in this latter case neither appears as a distinct party—so far as the available evidence goes—until after the middle of the second century B.C., the differences which led to this date back in their origin to early post-exilic times, and probably even earlier (see Vol. I, pp. 62 ff.); clear indications appear in the books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Malachi*. To decide as to which of these two is the subject of our psalm is hardly possible, owing to the want of more definite allusions.

While it must be confessed that this is one of the least edifying of the psalms, allowance must be made for the strong feelings engendered by party strife, especially if, as seems probable, religious differences were in question.

The text of the psalm, especially in the latter part, has undergone considerable corruption; some uncertainty as to the correctness of emendations must be recognized; the opinions of commentators differ in some cases.

The rhythm appears, for the most part, to be 4 : 3; but here again, owing to corruptions in the text, there is uncertainty in some of the verses.

The date may well be some time during the fourth or third century B.C.

*For the Precentor : A Psalm. David's.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 (2). Deliver me, Yahweh, from evil men,   | preserve me from violent men;   |
| 2 (3). They who harbour evil-things in their heart,   | daily ° do they stir up ° quarrels;   |
| 3 (4). They sharpen their tongue like a serpent,  | viper's venom is under their lips.<br>Selah.  |
| 4 (5). Keep me, Yahweh, from the hands of the wicked,<br>They who purpose to trip up my feet, | from the violent men preserve me;<br>5° (6°) by the wayside have they set<br>for me gins; |
| 5 (6). The proud have hidden a snare for me,  | ° and the spoilers ° have laid a net.<br>Selah.   |
| 6 (7). And I said to Yahweh: "My God art thou,  | ° hearken ° to the voice of my<br>supplication;   |
| 7 (8). Yahweh, my Lord, my strong help,   | thou dost cover my head in the day of<br>strife;  |

- 8 (9). Grant not, Yahweh, the desires of the wicked,  
 9 (10). ° May they who surround me not lift up their head °  
 10 (11). May ° coals of fire ° be shaken upon them,  
 11 (12). May the speaker of evil not be set up in the land,  
 12 (13). I know that Yahweh will maintain  
 13 (14). Of a truth, the righteous shall give thanks to thy name,
- ° that which they plan ° prosper not ". Selah.  
 may the mischief of their lips overwhelm them ; Selah.  
 ° may they fall ° into pits, and not rise up ;  
 may calamity pursue the violent man. ° the cause of the oppressed, the right of the needy.  
 the upright shall abide in thy presence.

## Text-critical Notes

2. Read יָגִירוּ for יָגִירוּ, "they do sojourn". 5. Read יִמְחֲצִלֵם (cp. Cant. 2<sup>19</sup>) for יִמְחֲצִלֵם, "and cords". 6. Om. יְהוָה "Yahweh". 8. Read אֲשֶׁר זָמַן for אֲשֶׁר זָמַן, "the wicked his device". 9. Read אֱלֹהֵימָן מִסְבִּי for אֱלֹהֵימָן מִסְבִּי, "they are, exalted Selah. The head of them that surround me". 10. Read, GV, אֵשׁ בְּחֹלִי for אֵשׁ בְּחֹלִי, "coals with fire". Read, S, יִפְּלוּ for יִפְּלוּ, "may he cause them to fall". 11. Om. לְמַדְחָתָהּ, "into deep pits", which overloads the half-line, and is probably an accidental doublet of בְּמַחְמֶרֶת in the preceding verse.

1-5. In view of the many dangers which beset him through the action of evil-disposed men, the psalmist's first impulse is to seek for help from God: *Deliver me, Yahweh, from evil men*; "man" in the Hebrew is used collectively, as the plural verbs show. That the dangers were twofold, consisting both of malicious and libellous speech, as well as of actual physical violence, is evident; but it is not always possible to decide in each case whether the expressions used are to be understood in a literal or a metaphorical sense; thus *violent*, whether as a noun, verb, or adjective, is often used in reference to injurious language or the like (e.g., Ps. 27<sup>12</sup>, 35<sup>11</sup>, Job 21<sup>27</sup>, Prov. 16<sup>29</sup>), and often elsewhere of physical violence (e.g., Ps. 18<sup>48</sup>, 72<sup>14</sup>). On the other hand, the *harbouring of evil things in the heart*, with which *quarrels*, lit. "wars", is paralleled, clearly refer to violence of thought and speech. How bitter and dangerous these were is seen by their being compared with the *tongue of a serpent* and *viper's venom*. Equally clearly, on the other hand, is physical violence meant when the psalmist prays that Yahweh may *keep him from the hands of the wicked*. But the expressions *trip up*, *set gins*, *hide snares*, *lay a net*, are all used figuratively as well as literally in different passages. Some of the expressions used suggest the use of the magic art.<sup>1</sup>

6-8. Against all these dangers the psalmist again prays that Yahweh will protect him; and he is confident that his prayer will be answered; for he protests that *Yahweh is his God*, his *strong help*, and that he will cover his *head in the day of strife*, a phrase which again suggests actual violence; he may, therefore, be confident that *Yahweh will not grant*

<sup>1</sup> See Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien* V., *Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmdichtung*, p. 93 (1924).

*the desires of the wicked*, nor prosper their plan. 9-11. But the psalmist is not content with the conviction that God will protect him; he pronounces a series of curses upon his enemies which graphically expose the bitterness of his feelings. First, he expresses the wish that they who beset him, *surround me*, may not lift up their head, a phrase meaning to be victorious (Ps. 3<sup>3</sup>, 27<sup>6</sup>, 110<sup>7</sup>), and that the *mis-chief* which the malicious utterances of *their lips* was intended to inflict, may fall upon them, and *overwhelm them*. Then, in figurative language, he wishes that *coals of fire may be shaken upon them*; the phrase occurs in Ps. 120<sup>4</sup>, cp. Prov. 26<sup>21</sup>, and a somewhat similar one, expressing the falling of divine wrath upon the sinner, occurs also in Ps. 11<sup>6</sup>; in a very different sense it is used in Prov. 25<sup>22</sup>. Further, they are to *fall into pits, and not rise up*; here again the language is figurative; the word does not occur elsewhere in the canonical books, but it is used in a figurative sense in Ecclus. 12<sup>16</sup> of treacherous thoughts; the meaning here will then be as in the preceding verse: may the harm intended for others be their own lot. And, finally, the psalmist wishes that the evil speaker *may not be set up in the land*—i.e., established in a secure position in the land of Judæa (the Hebrew *'ereš* can be translated "earth" only in special connexions); this may well contain a hint of the nature of the strife with which the psalmist is concerned; for the reference here is to those who are in an influential position, and this can only mean the ruling classes, in this case the priestly aristocracy, represented in later days by the Sadducæan party. It points therefore to the religious strife of which mention has been made in the introductory section. 12, 13. This is further borne out by the psalmist's words about the *oppressed* and the *needy*. The words of Josephus, though referring to later times, may well reflect long-standing conditions; in speaking of the Sadducees and Pharisees in the time of John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.), he says that "great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, the Pharisees have the multitude on their side" (*Antiq.* xiii. 298). The latter included the *oppressed* and the *needy* whose *cause* and *right* the psalmist *knows that Yahweh will maintain*. These are the *righteous* and the *upright* who *give thanks* to the name of *Yahweh*, and abide in his *presence*—i.e., are continually present at the temple worship.

### *Religious Teaching*

It would be unreasonable to expect to find in the *Psalms* the Christian ideal of a man's attitude towards his enemies: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (Matth. 5<sup>44</sup>); but in this psalm we have the next best thing to it; for there is no hint of

the desire of any personal retaliation against the vindictive enemies of the psalmist; all is left in the hands of God. That there should be some words of bitterness is natural enough; but the passive attitude of the victim of oppression himself reveals a spirit of true godliness. The result of the curses uttered, even though the magic art, as some commentators hold, enters in, is brought about, in the mind of such a deeply religious man as this psalmist, by the will of God.

## PSALM 141

ALTHOUGH this psalm is not reckoned among the seven penitential psalms, it is in its essence, as the exegetical notes will show, a striking illustration of the penitent's *rôle*. It is one of the "individual" psalms, being uttered by the psalmist in his own name. A matter of much interest in regard to it is that we may discern in *v.* 2 an intermediate step between the offering of sacrifices and that of purely spiritual worship. It does not go so far as certain passages in Psalms 40, 50, 51, 69, where the absence of sacrifices is envisaged, but, as the verse referred to shows, there is a distinct tendency in this direction.

The text of the psalm has suffered considerable corruption, and some part of it does not appear to have belonged to it in its original form (see the exegetical notes, *vv.* 5-7).

Even as originally written, it must belong to a late post-exilic period. The metre would seem to be 4 : 3 for the most part; but the state of some parts of the text makes this uncertain.

*A Psalm. David's.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yahweh, I cry unto thee, haste thee unto me,</li> <li>2. Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee,</li> <li>3. Set, Yahweh, ° a watch ° o'er my mouth,</li> <li>4. Do not thou incline my heart to aught that is evil,<br/>° I will not sit with them ° that do iniquity,</li> <li>5. Let the righteous smite me, let ° the godly chastise me °,<br/>[For yet, and my prayer (shall be)</li> <li>6. Their judges are cast down by the sides of a rock,</li> <li>7. Like one who cleaveth and rendeth the earth,</li> <li>8. ° And as for me °, toward thee, Yahweh, ° are mine eyes,</li> <li>9. Keep me from the snare they have laid for me,</li> <li>10. May the wicked fall ° in their own nets °,</li> </ol> | <p>give ear to my voice when I call to thee;<br/>the lifting-up of my hands as an evening-oblation:</p> <p>° a guard ° on the ° door ° of my lips;<br/>to act shamelessly ° like the doings of the wicked.°</p> <p>nor will I partake of their dainties.<br/>(but) the oil of the ° wicked ° let it not ° adorn ° my head.</p> <p>against their wickednesses.<br/>and they shall hear my words, for they are pleasant.<br/>our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol.]</p> <p>in thee do I trust, pour not out my soul;<br/>° and from the gins ° of the workers of iniquity.</p> <p>° while I altogether escape °.</p> |
|--|---|

## Text-critical Notes

3. Read, with G, שְׁמִרָה for שְׁמִרָה, a noun which does not occur elsewhere. Read נִצְרָה for imperat. נִצְרָה. Read דָּל for דָּלָה. 4. Read פְּעֻלֹת רָשָׁע for פְּעֻלֹת רָשָׁע, "deeds of wickedness". Read אֶת־אִישִׁים for אֶת־אִישִׁים, "with men". 5. Read חֲסִיד for חֲסִיד, "kindness", and יִכְיֶה for יִכְיֶה, "refuse". The rest of v. 5 with 6, 7 do not seem to be part of the original psalm, the text is very corrupt, and does not give adequate sense. 8. Read יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי for יְהוָה, "O God my Lord", for the rhythm's sake. 9. Read, with G, וּבִמְקוֹשֹׁת for וּבִמְקוֹשֹׁת, "and gins". 10. Read, with S, בְּמִכְבְּרֵיהֶם for בְּמִכְבְּרֵיהֶם, "his nets". Read יַחַד אֲנֹכִי עִדָּא for יַחַד אֲנֹכִי עִדָּא, "together I escape for ever".

1. The psalm opens with the cry of one who realizes his own shortcomings, hence the preliminary prayer that *Yahweh* would *haste* to hear him when he *calls* (cp. Ps. 70<sup>5</sup>). 2. The thought of *prayer* being as *incense*, and the *lifting-up* of his *hands*, synonymous with prayer (Ps. 28<sup>2</sup>), as an *evening-oblation*, foreshadows what in later days was to become actual fact; for in the Synagogue the forms of prayer for daily worship corresponded to the original daily sacrifices; we are also reminded of the prophet's words: "We shall render as bullocks (the offering of) our lips" (Hos. 14<sup>2</sup>). The *incense* and the *evening-oblation* (lit. "meal-offering" = *minḥah*) are mentioned together in accordance with the traditional use: "When anyone bringeth near the gift of a *minḥah* to *Yahweh*, his gift shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it and put frankincense thereon" (Lev. 2<sup>1</sup>, see also 6<sup>7</sup>, 8<sup>(14, 15)</sup>). That prayer was offered during the ceremony is evident from 1 Kgs. 18<sup>36</sup>. Our psalm was doubtless sung at the offering of the evening *minḥah*; this sacrifice was offered both morning and evening (Exod. 29<sup>39-41</sup>, Num. 28<sup>4-8</sup>). With the thought of prayer as incense cp. Rev. 8<sup>3</sup>. There follows (3, 4) the central prayer, in which the penitent singer points, by implication, to his besetting sin: *Set, Yahweh, a watch o'er my mouth, a guard on the door of my lips* (cp. Ps. 34<sup>13</sup>); the prevalence of opprobrious language, lying, libel, cursing, and the like, appears from various psalms to have been common (cp., too, *Pss. of Solomon* 12<sup>5</sup>: "In flaming fire perish the slanderous tongue", and Sir. 5<sup>14</sup>, 28<sup>13-26</sup>); and because evil-speaking is the outcome of evil thoughts, the prayer continues that his *heart may not incline to aught that is evil* (cp. Matth. 15<sup>19</sup>, "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts . . . false witness, railings"), which result in *acting shamelessly*. The right-minded man, therefore, makes the resolution not to consort *with them that do iniquity*, nor to *partake of their dainties*, and thus keep out of temptation's way; the reference seems to be to social intercourse, hence the emendation, *I will not sit*—i.e., at feasts—as parallel to *partaking of their dainties*. 5. Far better to suffer in wise humiliation the *smiting* of the *righteous* than



to be flattered by *the wicked* who anoint his head with oil at their feasts (cp. Eccles. 9<sup>7, 8</sup>, Luke 7<sup>46</sup>). As pointed out in the text-critical notes, the contents of the rest of *vv.* 5 and 6, 7 make it extremely improbable that they belong to the psalm as originally written; even the desperate emendations suggested by some commentators do not bring them satisfactorily into logical connexion with the context; and the variety of these emendations shows their uncertain character; the text has suffered grievous corruption. We have, therefore, been constrained to omit these verses.

8-10. Firm in his resolution to have nothing to do with the wicked, the penitent then proclaims his trust in *Yahweh*, towards whom his *eyes* are directed; and in trustful reliance he prays that *Yahweh* will not *pour out his soul*; a figurative expression meaning to take away his life (cp. Isa. 53<sup>12</sup>). In a final petition he prays that he may be kept from the *snares* and *gins laid for him by the workers of iniquity*, in reference, doubtless, to what is said in the latter half of *v.* 4. As so often elsewhere in many of the psalms, the wish is expressed that the wicked may fall in *their own nets* which they had prepared for others (cp. Ps. 7<sup>15, 16</sup>, 9<sup>15</sup>, and elsewhere), *while* he may *altogether escape*.

### *Religious Teaching*

The psalm sets forth the steps in the penitent's return to God. First, the approach to God, that he will give heed to the prayer addressed to him. Then the confession of sin, followed by the prayer for divine help. This is followed by the resolution of amendment of life, and of keeping out of temptation's way. Here there is the frame of mind, the earnest sincerity, which will gladly undergo the humiliation of rebuke from those in a position to give it. And, finally, there is the protestation of trust in God, and the conviction that he will keep his servant from further temptation.

This psalm must, thus, be pronounced a beautiful and helpful way-mark for guidance in the religious life.

### PSALM 142

THE title to this psalm (cp. that of Ps. 57), which occurs also in the Septuagint, was doubtless suggested by what is said in the last verse of the psalm; this recalled 1 Sam. 22<sup>1</sup> (David in the cave of Adullam), though the cases are far from parallel; the thought of David would constantly have been in the mind of the redactors.

We have in this psalm one of the most pathetic appeals in the

Psalter; it is uttered by an individual who is the victim of insidious foes; they have brought a slanderous accusation against him, and have caused him to be imprisoned. Though no indication is given of the cause and nature of the action taken against him, we may surmise that it was the outcome of party strife. An instructive illustration of this, though belonging to later times, is given by Josephus (*Antiq.* xii. 288-296). That he should feel himself utterly forsaken is natural enough, being kept in close confinement. In his forlorn state his one hope is in Yahweh, upon whom he casts himself wholeheartedly. Notable is the fact that in spite of his sufferings, the psalmist utters no vindictive cry for vengeance, an attitude not infrequently found in other psalms.

The psalm is not a liturgical one; it has never been used in any of the synagogal rites.

The date to be assigned is late post-exilic. The metre is mainly 3 : 3, where two beats to a line occur, the change is effective (*v.* 6). The last line of a psalm, as here, often has a different metre.

*Maskil. David's, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.*

- |        |                                       |  |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 (2). | With my voice to Yahweh do I cry,     | with my voice to Yahweh do I make my supplication; |
| 2 (3). | I pour out before him my complaint,   | my trouble before him I recount :                  |
| 3 (4). | When my spirit within me languished,  |  |
|        | In the way wherein I walked,          | thou didst know my fate ;                          |
| 4 (5). | Look to my right-hand, and see,       | they hid a snare for me ;                          |
|        | Escape hath vanished from me,         | there is none that payeth heed to me ;             |
| 5 (6). | I cry unto thee, Yahweh,              | there is none that careth for me.                  |
|        |                                       | I say : Thou art my refuge,                        |
|        | My portion in the land of the living. |  |
| 6 (7). | Give heed to my cry,                  |  |
|        | For I am brought very low ;           |  |
|        | Save me from my persecutors,          |  |
|        | For they are too strong for me.       |  |
| 7 (8). | Bring my soul out of prison,          | that I may praise thy name ;                       |
|        | Thy righteousness shall encompass me, |  |
|        | When thou shalt have prospered me.    |  |

*Text-critical Note*

7. Read יְיָ for יֵי, a particle of entreaty, and צַדִּיקִים for צַדִּיקִים "righteous ones".

1, 2. In these opening verses the psalmist indicates the outward form and expression in which his supplication is made: *with my voice*, meaning that he utters his words aloud; similarly in Ps. 64<sup>1</sup> the petitioner cries: "Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint", and so often elsewhere. That this was the customary manner of offering prayer is pointedly illustrated by what is said in 1 Sam. 1<sup>13</sup>, where Hannah "spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard", in consequence of which "Eli thought she had been drunken". The term *to pour out a complaint* (cp. Ps. 42<sup>4</sup>, 62<sup>8</sup>, and the title of 102) is very expressive; it is mostly used of pouring out water, or the like, so that in reference to prayer it describes the

gushing forth of words from an overfull heart. As though to an intimate friend to whom one can without stint detail one's worries, so does this poor stricken one *recount* his *trouble* before Yahweh. Then follows (3, 4) his *complaint*, addressed directly to Yahweh. Particularly to be noted here is the conviction expressed that already at the very beginning of his trouble, when his *spirit within him languished*, God knew the outcome of it all: *thou didst know my fate*, lit., "path", what was to come—*i.e.*, the course in which his life would run; for this sense of the word cp. Ps. 119<sup>105</sup>, Isa. 42<sup>16</sup>, Lam. 3<sup>9</sup>; this was when his foes *hid a snare* for him, in reference to some nefarious means of getting him into trouble. In his despairing state of mind he goes so far as to implore Yahweh to *look* on his *right-hand* side—*none payeth heed to me*—implying that his help has been wanting; at the *right-hand* was where Yahweh was wont to stand as helper, see Ps. 63<sup>8</sup>, 73<sup>23</sup>, 121<sup>5</sup>; it is the same forlorn mental condition as prompted another psalmist to cry: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" (Ps. 77<sup>9</sup>); he feels that there is no chance of *escape*, for *there is none that careth for me*. But his better self soon gains the upper hand, and his faith in Yahweh revives (5): *I cry unto thee Yahweh, I say: Thou art my refuge*. Then he utters his prayer in the knowledge that Yahweh is his *portion in the land of the living* (cp. Ps. 27<sup>13</sup>); asking that *he will give heed to his cry* (6) for he is *brought very low* because of his *persecutors* who have been *too strong for him* (7), and that he will *bring him out of prison* in order that he *may praise his name*. Being free once more and *prospered* by Yahweh, he will consort with the righteous, who *shall encompass* him, encircling him as a crown encircles the head; this is the root-meaning of the word.

### Religious Teaching

The uttering of private prayer aloud, as here taught, is something worth thinking about. The idea probably does not appeal to most; yet we have the example of our Lord (Matth. 24<sup>39, 42, 44</sup>); and the fact cannot be denied that the sound of one's own voice in prayer tends to realism and sincerity. It helps to envisage the nearness of God, the apprehension of which must be the yearning of every true believer. This is not the place to discourse further upon the subject, but it is one which it would be well to ponder over.

One other thing which this beautiful little psalm teaches is the blessedness and comfort of telling out one's troubles to God; a fearless, intimate intercourse with God is a means of union with him, which sanctifies life and all life's activities.



12. And of thy mercy annihilate mine enemies,  
and destroy all that trouble my soul ;  
For I am thy servant.

## Text-critical Notes

1. Om. יְהוָה; in each of the four instances of its occurrence it seems to interfere with the rhythm, and may well have been a later insertion by a copyist. Read יְהוָה־נִי for נִי . . . , "my supplications". Om. בְּאֱמֻנָתְךָ, "in thy faithfulness", as it disturbs the rhythm; it is an explanatory gloss. 2. Read, with S, אֶל־תִּבְרָא, "and enter not". 3. Om. בְּמַה־עוֹלָם, "as those that have been long dead", quoted from Lam. 3<sup>6</sup>, as it disturbs the rhythm. 7. Om. יְהוָה. 9. Om. יְהוָה. Read, with G, נִסִּיתִי for נִסִּיתִי, "I have hidden". 10. Read, with some MSS, בְּאֶרֶץ for בְּאֶרֶץ, "in the land". 11. Om. יְהוָה.

1. The threefold appeal, *Hear, Give ear, Answer*, expresses the intensity of the psalmist's need. The first two clauses are taken almost verbally from Ps. 39<sup>12</sup>. The righteousness of God has here the sense of "faithfulness", as the explanatory gloss shows; the word is used as parallel to "love" (*hesed*) in Ps. 36<sup>10</sup>, 103<sup>17</sup>, and it often has the force of "deliverance" in Deutero-Isaiah. 2. The consciousness of guilt is implied in the form of the prayer now offered, that God may *not bring* the sufferer into condemnation, *judgement*, for he seems to recognize that it is by the divine will that punishment has come upon him; and he utters the implied confession that he is not guiltless: *for none living is righteous in thy sight*; with the thought cp. Ps. 103<sup>3</sup>, and it may well have been in the Apostle's mind in Rom. 3<sup>20</sup>. And then (3) as though the punishment he is suffering were greater than he deserved, the psalmist goes on to describe the terrible severity of the treatment to which he is subjected. This is expressed in a threefold manner again: *the enemy persecuteth, crusheth, causeth to dwell in dark places*. We may note here the three steps in the procedure: first, the fact of persecution; then, its mode, and finally, its intended result; persecuted, lit. "chased after", crushed, lit. "trodden down", made to dwell in dark places—i.e., in *Sheol*—the whole picture is clearly taken from Ps. 7<sup>5</sup>; and for the expression "dark places", cp. Ps. 88<sup>6</sup>. In such case, small wonder that (4) his spirit *fainteth within* him, and his *heart is desolate*—i.e., he is plunged in despair. Here again familiar words from other psalms were in the mind of the forlorn sufferer (cp. Ps. 61<sup>2</sup>, 77<sup>3</sup>, 142<sup>3</sup>). Some comfort he finds, it is true, in recalling the many proofs of God's love and power in the past history of his people; and here, once more, there is a threefold expression of thought: *I remember, meditate, muse*; the remembrance of the *days* of old, of God's *doing* in the past, and of *the work* of his *hands*, had been the comfort of others in trouble too; the whole verse is taken from Ps. 77<sup>5, 11, 12</sup>, cp. also Ps. 44<sup>1</sup>, 78<sup>3</sup>; and with living trust that that lovingkindness will again be manifested, he spreads forth his hands in prayer to God (cp. Ps. 28<sup>2</sup>, 68<sup>31</sup>), likening

himself in his yearning to a parched land in sore need of moisture; the simile is taken from Ps. 63<sup>1</sup>. The intensity of his need prompts the impatient utterance (7): *Speedily answer me* (cp. Ps. 40<sup>13, 17, 102</sup>), for he feels that his *spirit* is failing (cp. Ps. 84<sup>2</sup>), and he is in danger of death if God does not turn to him; *Hide not thy face from me*, he cries, as another psalmist had said, Ps. 27<sup>9</sup>, *lest I become like them that descend to the Pit*, a synonym for *Sheol*; the words are taken from Ps. 28<sup>1</sup>, cp. 88<sup>6</sup>.

In a calmer frame of mind the psalmist then continues his prayer; the hours of darkness, wherein the spirit is prone to fearfulness, are past, and with the morning fresh hopes arise (8): *Let me hear of thy lovingkindness at morn, for in thee do I trust* (cp. Ps. 90<sup>14, 25</sup>); and there is the longing to walk in the way that God wills (cp. Ps. 25<sup>4, 32</sup>), for his soul is *lifted up* to God (cp. Ps. 25<sup>1, 86</sup>); he has thrown himself upon God, and prays in certitude of being heard (9): *Deliver me from my foes* (cp. Ps. 31<sup>15, 59</sup>, 142<sup>6</sup>), *unto thee do I flee* (cp. Ps. 59<sup>16</sup>). Then (10, 11) once more the prayer to do God's *will* is uttered; *Teach me to do thy will* (cp. Ps. 25<sup>4, 27</sup>), followed by the protestation: *Thou art my God*; the expression *thy good spirit* does not occur elsewhere; but we have "thy holy spirit" in Ps. 51<sup>11</sup>. The plea that deliverance may come *for thy name's sake* occurs also in Ps. 31<sup>3</sup> and cp. 25<sup>11</sup>. As already remarked, the psalm would be the better for the omission of the last verse (12), with the exception of the final words: *I am thy servant*, cp. Ps. 116<sup>16</sup>.

It will have been noticed how greatly our psalmist is indebted to the writers of other psalms; the point is interesting as illustrating familiarity with the Psalter as a whole. Doubtless the same is to be said of other psalmists, but there is certainly no other psalm which so fully illustrates this characteristic.

### *Religious Teaching*

So far as the earnest appeal to God for help in time of trouble is concerned, the religious teaching of this psalm is to be paralleled by that of many others; but in one respect it differs from most of these in that the teaching is implicit, or only hinted at, rather than explicitly stated. This centres, first, in the sense of sinfulness; for though expressed in general terms, "none living is righteous in thy sight", the psalmist, in effect, confesses his sin by the prayer that God will not bring him into judgement. And this recognition of sin calls forth repentance; and repentance is shown forth by amendment of life; hence the conviction of forgiveness. It is a spiritual process of universal application; and this it is which makes the psalm of such inestimable value when its spirit is entered into, and acted upon.

## PSALM 144

AN initial difficulty presents itself in studying this psalm, namely, whether it is to be regarded as a unity or not. Opinions, not unnaturally, differ on the subject. Of one thing, however, there can be no doubt: there has been some serious dislocation of the text; this may possibly be due to the attempt of some scribe to construct a unity out of two originally independent psalms. In other words, we contend that the psalm is not a unity, though we fully recognize the difficulty of indicating exactly where the division between the two is to be sought. It is evident that two very different sets of conditions must be postulated when it is said, on the one hand: "Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of strangers" (*v.* 11), and, on the other, when a time of peaceful prosperity is described in such words as: "Our sheep are thousands, ten thousands, in our fields" (*v.* 13). It is recognized by most commentators that the psalm contains several glosses—*e.g.*, *vv.* 3, 4 break the connexion between *vv.* 2 and 5; and that there is much borrowing from other psalms, especially from Ps. 18, in the earlier part. In the rendering given below we have put in square brackets what we regard as glosses. The main dislocation of the text occurs in *vv.* 8 and 11, the repetitions show clearly that some displacement has taken place. How this should be reconstructed is again subject to differences of opinion; we have endeavoured to give a logical sequence, while recognizing the element of uncertainty as to the correctness of our reconstruction. Subjectivity can hardly fail to assert itself in such cases.

As to date, there are again a variety of opinions, a few of which may be mentioned. Briggs assigns it to "the troublous times at the beginning of the work of Nehemiah, when the people were called to arms against their treacherous neighbours". Kittel interprets the psalm eschatologically, and regards it as one among the latest. Gunkel, followed by Hans Schmidt, assigns it to the period of the monarchy. Similarly Herkenne, who argues with much force that the speaker is king Hezekiah. Barnes quotes Westcott to the effect that "the later psalms are a softened echo of the strains of David, and not new songs". For ourselves, we cannot doubt that, in view of *v.* 10, "who giveth victory to kings, who rescueth David his servant", the psalm, in its original form, belongs to the monarchical period; we hesitate to give a more exact date, though we feel that Herkenne's contention that Hezekiah is the king in question is attractive.

For reasons already indicated the question of the rhythm is difficult ; all that can be said is that it is very irregular.

*David's.*<sup>o</sup>

1. Blessed be Yahweh, my Rock,  
Who teacheth my hands to war, ° my fingers ° to the battle,  
2. ° Yahweh °, ° my Rock °, and my  
fortress,  
My shield, and in him do I trust,  
[3. Yahweh, what is man, that thou takest  
knowledge of him ?  
4. Man is like unto a breath,  
5. Yahweh, bow-thy-heavens and descend,  
6. Flash forth ° lightnings °, and scatter  
them,  
7. Put forth ° thine hand ° from above,  
° Deliver me ° from the hand of  
strangers,  
8. whose mouth speaketh vanity,  
And their right-hand is a lying right-hand.  
9. ° A new song  
will I sing to thee,  
With a ten-stringed harp  
will I make melody to thee,  
10. Who giveth victory to ° his king °, who rescueth David his servant.  
[11. Deliver me from the hand of strangers, ° whose mouth speaketh vanity,  
And their right-hand is a lying right-hand.]  
12. ° Our sons are like plants  
Well-grown in their borders ° ;  
Our daughters like corner-stones  
Of sculptured pattern ; °  
13. ° Our garners ° supplying  
° Of every kind ° ;  
° Our sheep ° are thousands,  
Ten-thousands in our fields,  
14. ° Our oxen ° well-laden ; °  
No tumult in our broad-places.  
15. Happy the people  
In such a case,  
Happy the people  
Whose God is Yahweh.

*Text-critical Notes*

*Title:* G adds *προς τον Γολιαδ*, a late scribe's surmise. 1. *אֶצְבָּעוֹתַי* two beats. 2. Add *יְהוָה* for the sake of the rhythm. Read *סִלְעִי* with Ps. 18<sup>2</sup> for *הַסִּלְעִי*, "my mercy". Read *עַמִּים* with some MSS SV, cp. Ps. 18<sup>47</sup>, for *עַמִּי* "my people". 5. Om. *ש. 3, 4* as a later insertion. 6. Read *בְּרָקִים* with Ps. 18<sup>14</sup> for *בָּרָק*, "lightning". 7. Read, with several MSS and G *יָדֶיךָ* for *יָדֶיךָ*, "thy hands". Read, following Ps. 18<sup>16</sup> *הַמִּשְׁכֵּנִי* for *פָּצְנִי*, "rescue me", and place *הַמִּצִּילֵנִי* before *בְּיָד*, "from the hand of . . ." 9. Om. *אֱלֹהִים* (cp. *v. 1*) for the sake of the metre. 10. Read *מַלְכֵיךָ* for *מַלְכֵי*, "kings". Om., for the sake of the metre, *מִחֶרֶב רָעָה*, "from the evil sword", added. For *v. 11*, which is a doublet, see *v. 7*. 8. 12. Om. *אֲשֶׁר*, "who". Read, with Duhm, *בְּעֶרְוָהוֹם*, cp. Cant. 5<sup>13</sup>, 6<sup>3</sup>, for *בְּעֶרְוָהוֹם*, "in their youth". Om. *הַיְקָל*, "temple". 13. Om. *מָלְאִים*, "full". For *אֱלֵינוּ*, cp. Ecclus. 37<sup>28</sup>, Gunkel suggests *עַל-מִזֹּן* for *מִזֹּן*, "sustenance, on sustenance". Read *צִמְחֵנוּ* for *צִמְחֵנוּ*. 14. Read with some MSS *אֵין-פָּרֵץ* for *אֵין-פָּרֵץ*. Om., as a marginal gloss, *וְאֵין יוֹצֵא*, "no outburst and no going forth", the reference seems to be to untimely birth among the cattle; see Gen. 38<sup>30</sup>, 2 Sam. 6<sup>8</sup>, 1 Chron. 13<sup>11</sup>, and Exod. 21<sup>12</sup>.



1, 2. The opening ascription of praise is taken almost entirely from Ps. 18; it does not present a very edifying conception of Yahweh, but is in accordance with the ancient Semitic belief that the deities played a leading part in wars; the belief occurs even in quite late times (cp. Zech. 9<sup>13, 14</sup>, 10<sup>4</sup>). This belief comes out in the thought that Yahweh *teacheth* a man's *hands to war* (cp. Ps. 18<sup>34</sup>, 2 Sam. 22<sup>36</sup>), and his *fingers to the battle*—i.e., how to handle spear and bow; Yahweh himself is spoken of as "mighty in battle" (Ps. 24<sup>8</sup>), and we recall the expression "to consecrate", or sanctify, "war" (Mic. 3<sup>5</sup>, Jer. 6<sup>4</sup>, Joel 3 (4)<sup>9</sup>), showing that war was, therefore, conceived of as a holy act. For the significance of the title *Rock* applied to Yahweh see the comment on Ps. 18<sup>46</sup>; the two words used (in vv. 1, 2) are different in Hebrew, taken, respectively, from Ps. 18<sup>46</sup> and 2. *Who subdueth the peoples beneath me* refers to the surrounding peoples, hence the emendation from Ps. 18<sup>47</sup> and various MSS; the singular would imply that the king in question had subdued his own people! As pointed out in the text-critical notes, vv. 3, 4 come in here inappropriately and break the connexion; they are a marginal comment by a later scribe, and have been inserted in the text. 5-8 are an extract from the description of the theophany (Ps. 18<sup>9, 14, 16, 44, 45</sup>, cp. also 104<sup>32, 69<sup>14</sup>, 106<sup>26</sup></sup>); see the notes on these psalms. In gratitude for the victory that has been gained (cp. vv. 1, 2), in spite of perilous episodes (7) the king, or some courtier in his name, utters a short offering of praise and thanksgiving, which concludes this part of the psalm (9, 10). A *new song*, sung to the accompaniment of a *ten-stringed harp*, recalls Ps. 33<sup>2, 3</sup> (cp. Ps. 40<sup>3</sup>, 149<sup>1</sup>). After the very marked use of older songs which, presumably, has so far characterized our psalm, the words strike one as significant, and we cannot but feel sympathy with those commentators who see in what follows, the "new song" itself. Unfortunately, this will not do; the condition of peaceful prosperity depicted in the later portion of our psalm is not such as can be expected to ensue immediately after a successful war; the bringing-about of such conditions takes time; and those described must belong to some subsequent period. It may well be that the "new song" of which the singer speaks may have figured in the original form of our psalm, but that in the vicissitudes of transmission it has been lost. At any rate, what follows can hardly have been its purport. Here the thanksgiving centres in *victory to his king, who rescueth David his servant*. That *David* is meant is highly improbable. The reference is either to the general idea of victory, naturally associated with the name of David, who was often victorious, or else "David" is used symbolically, and applied to one of his seed.

The abrupt way in which the last portion (12-15) begins suggests that it is a fragment from some other psalm which a compiler thought

an appropriate conclusion to the one before him; a similar proceeding occurs elsewhere in the Psalter (*e.g.*, Pss. 19, 27). We have, first, a charming picture of the healthy well-being of the younger members of the community, the *sons like plants in their borders* (lit. "beds", see Cant. 5<sup>13</sup>, 6<sup>2</sup>); "along the brook", as Thomson tells us, "are tall daisies, flaming gladiolus, crimson iris, variegated lilies, gay oleanders, wild roses . . ." (*The Land and the Book*, i. 137 [1881]); something of this kind may well have been in the mind of the poet. Then, *our daughters like corner-stones of sculptured pattern*; the mention of the temple in such a connexion seems out of place; the picture is drawn from the tall, stately corner of any conspicuous building. Then follows an account of the prosperous state of the country, the stress being naturally laid on the abundance of cattle—somewhat overdrawn, no doubt, but permissible enough to poetical imagination. In times of such prosperity contentment reigns, and there is *no tumult in our broad places*, the open spaces near the gates, not "streets", which were always very narrow. A religious note is sounded at the close, where it is implied that all this prosperity is due to the fact that *Yahweh is the God of the people*. But otherwise it must be confessed that the religious tone of the psalm is not such as appeals to us. A special section on the religious teaching is, therefore, not called for in the case of this psalm.

### PSALM 145

THIS triumphant hymn of praise, calling upon all men to glorify the greatness and majesty of God, is one of the most inspiring in the Psalter. Though largely composed of sayings from other psalms, these are so harmoniously woven together that the psalm gives the impression of an original composition. In spite of its being an acrostic psalm (it is the last of these), there is no sign of mechanical construction, such as strikes one in the case, *e.g.*, of Ps. 119. A special feature is the earnestly expressed wish that the knowledge of Yahweh may become world-wide; this universalistic outlook was by no means always prominent among the Jews in post-exilic times, as witness the polemic in the book of *Jonah*. In this connexion the mention of the kingdom of Yahweh is of special importance; it connotes God's rule from and to all time, in Heaven as on earth; there is nothing of an eschatological nature in its use here; it has been in use in the Liturgy of the Synagogue from very early times, but has never been one of the special psalms for New Year's Day.

The psalm is one of the latest in the Psalter; this is shown by the numerous points of affinity with psalms of early and late date, and also by the Aramaisms which occur here and there.

The metre is 3 : 3 ; in the earlier part of the psalm 2 : 2 : 2.

*A Song of Praise. David's*

1. א I will exalt thee, my God, the King, I will bless thy name for ever.°
2. ב Every day will I bless thee,  
And will praise thy name  
For ever and ever.
3. ג Great is Yahweh,  
And highly to be praised,  
His greatness is unsearchable.
4. ד ° Generation to generation  
Let them praise thy works,  
And declare thy mighty acts.°
5. ה Of the majesty of thy glory,  
Of thy splendour ° let them tell ° ;  
Of thy wonder-works ° let them sing ° ;
6. ו Of the might of thy terrible-deeds ° of thy great acts ° ° let them dis-  
let them speak, course ;
7. ז The memorial of thy ° great ° and let them shout-for-joy because of  
goodness let them pour forth, thy righteousness °.
8. ח Gracious and merciful is Yahweh, longsuffering and of great loving-  
kindness ;  
and his mercies are over all his works.
9. ט Good is Yahweh to all,
10. י Let all thy works, Yahweh, give thee thanks,  
and let thy godly ones bless thee ;
11. יא The glory of thy kingdom let them declare,  
and discourse of thy power,  
and the glorious majesty ° of thy kingdom ° ;
12. ב To make known ° to men ° ° thy power ° ;
13. ג ° His kingdom ° is a kingdom of all ages,  
and his rule throughout all generations.  
° [Faithful is Yahweh in all his words,  
and loving in all his works] °.
14. ד Yahweh upholdeth all that fall,  
and raiseth up all that are bowed down ;
15. ה The eyes of all wait upon thee,  
thou givest their food in its time ;
16. ו Thou ° thyself ° openest thine hand, satisfying all living with favour.
17. ז Righteous is Yahweh in all his ways,  
and merciful in all his works,
18. ח Nigh is Yahweh to all that call upon him,  
to all that call upon him in truth ;
19. ט The desire of them that fear him he fulfilleth,  
their cry he heareth, and helpeth them.
20. י Yahweh preserveth all that love him,  
but all the wicked he destroyeth,
21. יא The praise of Yahweh shall my mouth utter,  
and let all flesh bless his holy name.°

*Text-critical Notes*

1. Om. וְעַד, which overloads the half-line. 4. The rhythmic measure in the Hebrew is difficult to reproduce in English ; literally rendered the text runs : " Let (one) generation praise thy works to (another) generation, and let (all of) them declare thy mighty acts ". 5. Read, following GS, וְדַבְּרִי for וְדַבְּרִי, " and the words of ". Read, following S, אֲשִׁירָה for אֲשִׁירָה, " let me sing ". 6. Read דּוֹלוּתֶיךָ for דּוֹלוּתֶיךָ. Read, with T, וְאֶסְפָּרְךָ for וְאֶסְפָּרְךָ, " let me discourse ". 7. Read רַב־ for רַב־. Two beats to צִדְקֶיךָ. 12. Read לְאָדָם for לְאָדָם, " for the sons of man ", for the sake of the rhythm. Read, following GS, גְּבוּרָתְךָ for גְּבוּרָתְךָ, " his mighty powers ". Read, following GS, מַלְכוּתְךָ for מַלְכוּתְךָ. 13. Read מַלְכוּתְךָ for מַלְכוּתְךָ " thy kingdom ", in view of what follows in the verse (ב) which has fallen out of the text. 13<sup>ed</sup>. This half-verse has been preserved in GSV, and can be rendered : נֶאֱמָן יְהוָה בְּכִלְיָךְ בְּרִיו וְחֲסִיד בְּקִלְמִעֵשָׁיו. 15. Om. לָהֶם, " to them ", for the sake of the rhythm. 16. Read, with G, אֶת, אֶת. 21. Om. לְעוֹלָם, " for ever and ever ", which is a later addition. Some MSS add : וְנִאֲמָנִי נִבְרָךְ יְהוָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם תְּהַלְלֶנּוּ, " and we will bless Yah from henceforth and for ever. Hallelujah ".

1. This opening verse, which serves as a kind of text, expresses the general content of what is to follow. *I will exalt thee* (cp. Pss. 99<sup>5,9</sup>, 107<sup>32</sup>) gives the key-note, denoting in the mind of the writer the infinite distance of the Divine Personality above men. To speak of God as *King* expresses the utmost endeavour of men in those days to describe a unique superiority over mankind in general; but it is also significant, in view of what follows, as indicating the world-wide rulership of Yahweh. *For ever*, here, has the sense of "continually". 2, 3. *Every day* is probably to be taken in a literal sense, for it may well be in accordance with traditional usage that this psalm was recited thrice daily in the synagogue by many pious Jews; the mention of this is from a third-century Rabbi (Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst* . . ., p. 80 [1913]). To praise the *name* of Yahweh (cp., e.g., Ps. 103<sup>1</sup>), as pointed out elsewhere, reminds us that the name was synonymous with the Person. The *greatness* of Yahweh, for which praise is due to him, is also a frequent theme of the psalmists (48<sup>1</sup>, 96<sup>4</sup>), and its *unsearchableness*, like all that appertains to the Divine Nature—i.e., the inability of man to apprehend it—is especially emphasized in the book of *Job* (5<sup>9</sup>, 9<sup>10</sup>, 11<sup>7</sup>, 34<sup>24</sup>, 36<sup>26</sup>). 4-7. Very beautiful is the way in which the psalmist earnestly expresses the desire that others should bear witness to the power and majesty of Yahweh; the hope is expressed that every *generation* should hand on the knowledge of this, one to the other (cp. Ps. 78<sup>4</sup>) telling of his mighty-acts (one word in Hebrew), of his *glory* and *splendour*, his *wonder-works* (one word in Hebrew), and terror-inspiring action (cp. the theophanic description); they are all the outcome of his great-goodness (one word in Hebrew) and righteousness. The psalmist has done his utmost to set forth the inexpressible power and might of Yahweh; and now (8-13) he extols his God from a different aspect, and speaks of his *graciousness*, *mercy*, *longsuffering* and *lovingkindness* to all (cp. Ps. 86<sup>5, 15</sup>, 100<sup>5</sup>, 103<sup>8</sup>); *his mercies are over all his works* is in reference to his highest work of creation, man, as the words which follow show: *Let all thy works, Yahweh, give thee thanks* (cp. Ps. 103<sup>22</sup>), *and let all thy loved ones bless thee* (cp. Ps. 132<sup>16</sup>); and again all men are called upon to *declare* the *glory* of his *kingdom*, which is a *kingdom of all ages*. By kingdom is to be understood, of course, a *rule*, or *dominion*, and thus not connoting any thought of a land or area, the ordinary Jewish conception of the time. From the wide purview over the unlimited expanse of Yahweh's rule the psalmist directs his thoughts more particularly to his own people of the present time. 14-19. His care is for all who *fall* (cp. Ps. 37<sup>24</sup>), and *are bowed down* (cp. Ps. 146<sup>8</sup>)—i.e., who are in want—but they that *wait upon* him (cp. Ps. 104<sup>27</sup>) receive *their food in its time* lavishly from his open hand (cp. Ps. 104<sup>28</sup>), for he is *righteous* and *merciful*, and *nigh unto all that call upon him in truth* and that *fear him*. In fine, those who love Yahweh

he *preserveth* (cp. Ps. 97<sup>10</sup>), but *all the wicked he destroyeth*: and the psalmist himself will ever persist in *the praise of Yahweh, and let all flesh bless his holy name* (cp. Ps. 150<sup>6</sup>).

### *Religious Teaching*

As a hymn of praise to God this psalm stands out as one of the most beautiful in the Psalter. What must particularly demand our sympathetic attention is the earnest attempt to depict the glory of God. The psalmist's thoughts were prompted by such soul-exalting sights as the gorgeous gold of the rising sun, and the superbly sky-decked tints of the sun at its setting, the flashes of silver-blue lightning when the thunder's roar made him think that it must be the very voice of Yahweh, and the lurid glare of volcanic eruptions sent up from the bowels of the earth—we know, it is true, that these are but the twinkling stars in a world which is no more than a dusty speck of one universe of many; but let us in humble gratitude acknowledge that the psalmist did his best; and beautiful it is, even though we are convinced that the glories of the creative power of the inapprehensible majesty of God transcend the most daring flights of human imagination! Could we do better? It is, in any case, fitting that we should honour the spirit which seeks to set forth the divine glory and laud the Name of him, by whom, in loving condescension, praise is accepted, though offered by his humblest worshippers. The religious teaching of this psalm centres in offering praise to God, no matter how inadequate.

### PSALM 146

THIS is the first of the so-called "Hallelujah psalms", the others being 147–150, because they begin and conclude with this expression of praise. As the offering of praise it is very fitting that it has from early times, together with the other four, been sung daily at the morning synagogal service; the use may well have been handed down from earlier days. The psalm does not, either in outward form or in its fullness of thought, reach the inspired height of the previous one. Its reference to princes suggests the possibility that it may have been prompted by some inadvisable action on the part of the Jewish rulers in their dealings with some foreign power. At any rate, the uselessness of trusting in princes seems to be the text, as it were, of the psalmist's warning and exhortation.

Other psalms have again been much drawn upon; but, as in Ps. 145, the psalmist utilizes his material in his own way; quite his own, in especial, is the impressive sixfold repetition of the name of Yahweh at the

beginning of the sentence, to emphasize his many-sided help, as against the feeble and unreliable efforts of man.

The date of the psalm is late, as shown both by the use of other psalms, of which some are themselves of late date, and also by the occurrence of Aramaisms.

The metre is, with the exception of *v.* 4, where the change of subject makes the change of metre distinctly effective, almost uniformly 3 : 3 (in *v.* 3 it is 2 : 2 : 2).

*Hallelujah.*<sup>o</sup>

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.  | Praise Yahweh, my soul !                |   |
| 2.  | I will praise Yahweh while I live,      | will sing praise to my God while I have my being. |
| 3.  | Trust not in princes,                   |   |
|     | in the offspring of man ;               |   |
|     | in him is no help,                      |   |
| 4.  | His spirit goeth forth,                 |   |
|     | he returneth to his earth,              |   |
|     | in that selfsame day                    |   |
|     | his purposes perish.                    |   |
| 5.  | Blessed is he ° whose help ° is the God |   |
|     | of Jacob,                               | whose hope is in Yahweh his God,                  |
| 6.  | Maker of heaven and earth,              | the sea and all that in them is,                  |
|     | ° Who keepeth ° truth for ever,         | 7. who upholdeth justice for the oppressed,       |
|     | Who giveth food to the hungry,          | Yahweh setteth free the prisoners.                |
| 8.  | Yahweh giveth sight to the blind,       | Yahweh raiseth up those bowed down,               |
| 9.  | Yahweh preserveth strangers,            | Orphan and widow he sustaineth ;                  |
| 8°  | ° Yahweh loveth the righteous °,        | 9° but the way of the wicked he perverteth.       |
| 10. | Yahweh reigneth for ever,               | thy God, O Zion, to all generations.              |

*Hallelujah.*

*Text-critical Notes*

1. G adds *Αγαλλου και Ζαχαριου*. 5. *בְּעֲזָרוֹ* for *עֲזָרוֹ*, "in his help". 6. Read *שִׁמְרֵם* for *הַשִּׁמְרֵם*, omitting the art. as in the other participles. 8°. This half-line has clearly become misplaced ; in the Hebrew text it comes after, " . . . those bowed down " ; as it stands the logical sequence is disturbed.

1. With an utterance of self-encouragement, found elsewhere in the psalms (*e.g.*, 103<sup>1</sup>, 104<sup>1</sup>), *Praise Yahweh, my soul*, the worshipper begins by protesting that this is his intention as long as he lives, *while I have my being*, a very rare mode of expression in Hebrew (*cp.* Ps. 104<sup>33</sup>). 2. The warning not to trust in princes (*cp.* Ps. 118<sup>9</sup>), coming in the forefront of the psalm, shows its emphasis, and must, in all probability, refer to some specific action on the part of the Jewish rulers in relation to their suzerain, or his representative. It is, of course, impossible to indicate the occasion alluded to ; but the detailed way in which this is deprecated suggests that it was an occurrence of some moment ; *help* from such a source, prince though he might be, was doomed to failure, for as soon as he ceases breathing—the flight of a vapour—he *returneth to his earth* (Gen. 3<sup>19</sup>, Ps. 104<sup>29</sup>) ; the same thought, possibly with this verse in mind, was expressed by Mattathias, the father of the Maccabæan leaders, in reference to Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc. 2<sup>63</sup>). The

words, *his purposes* (or plans) *perish*, point again to some political occasion.

5-9. In inexpressible contrast to any power that man, however highly placed, may possess, and thereby give help, is that which is accorded by *the God of Jacob*. It may be pointed out that the use of the name of Jacob as applied to Judah is restricted almost without exception to post-exilic passages (*e.g.*, Isa. 65<sup>9</sup>, Obad. 10, Mal. 2<sup>12</sup>); in the psalms the expression "the God of Jacob" occurs elsewhere in 114<sup>7</sup> (not 24<sup>6</sup>); otherwise "Jacob" refers to the northern kingdom (*e.g.*, Am. 7<sup>2, 5</sup>, Hos. 12<sup>13</sup>, etc.). At any rate, as the psalmist says, *he whose hope* is set on *Yahweh his God* lives in the conviction that his help will be forthcoming when the need arises; and the stress laid on *his God* expresses the contrast between the faith of the true Jew with that of the princes who believed in many gods. Then he particularizes: This hope is founded on and embedded in the age-long faith in Yahweh as the *Maker of heaven and earth*; the separate mention of the *sea*, as though distinct from the earth, echoes the ancient belief reflected in Gen. 1<sup>9, 10</sup>. But the creative power of Yahweh, as the psalmist goes on to show, necessarily implies care for that highest act of creation, man, and more especially for those among men who acknowledge him as their Creator and are his worshippers. While truth and justice stand foremost in all his actions, his mercy and lovingkindness take thought of all. The short sentences which follow, each beginning with *Yahweh*, in order to lay stress on *his* loving care, are, as we have said, unique in the *Psalms*, though the thoughts expressed necessarily echo those of other thinkers: *Who giveth food to the hungry* (Ps. 107<sup>9</sup>, 145<sup>15</sup>); behind that lies, of course, the thought of the creative power which enables the soil to yield its fruits (Gen. 1<sup>11, 12</sup>, Hos. 2<sup>8</sup>). *Setteth free the prisoners* (68<sup>6</sup>, 107<sup>14</sup>, cp. Isa. 42<sup>7</sup>). *Giveth sight to the blind*; this thought does not occur elsewhere in the *Psalms*, but see Isa. 42<sup>7</sup>, cp. also 29<sup>18</sup>, 35<sup>5</sup>. *Raiseth up those bowed down*—*i.e.*, those weighted down by adversity; the expression is a rare one, used in a figurative sense in the *Psalms* (57<sup>6</sup>, 145<sup>14</sup>), though in Isa. 58<sup>5</sup>, Mic. 6<sup>6</sup>, it is used literally of bowing down in worship. *Preserveth strangers* (on the dislocation of the text here see exegetical note); the care of strangers sojourning among the people is very often insisted upon (*e.g.*, Lev. 19<sup>10</sup>, Deut. 10<sup>18, 19</sup>, etc.); in the *Psalms* they are mentioned only in 94<sup>6</sup>; in 39<sup>12</sup>, 119<sup>19</sup>, the word is used in a somewhat different sense; the care of the orphan, or fatherless, and widow is also again and again enjoined (*e.g.*, Exod. 22<sup>22</sup>, Deut. 10<sup>18</sup>), and in the *Psalms* 68<sup>5</sup>, cp. 10<sup>14</sup>, 94<sup>6</sup>; all these are in the care of Yahweh. Finally, the psalmist adds the oft-expressed thought of Yahweh's love for the righteous man (see, *e.g.*, 5<sup>12</sup> and often elsewhere in the *Psalms*), *but the way of the wicked he perverteth*, a word used only here in this sense.

The psalm closes (10) with the triumphant cry : *Yahweh reigneth for ever!* A universalistic note often sounded in the *Psalms* (10<sup>18</sup>, 47<sup>2, 3, 6-8</sup>, 93<sup>1, 2</sup>, 96<sup>10</sup>, 97<sup>1</sup>), though there is added here—*thy God, O Zion*—that Palestine will be the centre of the divine rule (29<sup>10, 11</sup>, 99<sup>1, 2</sup>). In the present case, at any rate, there is no thought of the Messianic kingdom ; the psalmist is proclaiming the truth of the divine rule, and as the Jews were the one people who acknowledged and worshipped Yahweh, it was natural to present him as reigning from Zion.

### *Religious Teaching*

This has been sufficiently brought out in the exegetical notes.

## PSALM 147

THE first word of this psalm, which repeats the title, indicates its entire content : praise to Yahweh for his manifold works. These, it must be allowed, are not arranged in orderly fashion, and there is but little logical sequence in the enumeration of the different and many-sided kinds of works of power and love for which Yahweh is praised. But the outpouring of a heart so full of gratitude for the marks of divine solicitude manifest in all around, must endear this psalm to all who, like this psalmist, look beneath the surface of things which happen in the world, whether in Nature or among men, and discern in them workings, infinitesimal as they may appear individually, of a divine plan of action. If in some cases things are expressed in an anthropomorphic manner not wholly to our taste, it must be remembered that modes of expression have a good deal to do with this, though it is not, of course, denied that at times somewhat *naïve* and, as yet, undeveloped conceptions of God are held.

As to the question of unity, there are in *vv.* 7 and 12 words which read like the beginning of a new psalm, and according to the Septuagint and the Vulgate, the psalm is really composed of two psalms, consisting of *vv.* 1-11 and 12-20. It is, of course, possible that we have here the joining together of more than one psalm ; the unevenness and variegated subject-matter of our psalm justify the belief that it may well be from more than one hand.

Here again, as in the two preceding psalms, there is considerable borrowing from other psalms, and also from the later portions of the book of *Isaiah*.

The date must be pronounced as late post-exilic.

The metre is uniformly 3 : 3.



## Hallelujah.

1. ° Praise Yahweh °, for well it is ° to  
laud him °,  
2. Yahweh buildeth up Jerusalem,  
3. He healeth the broken in heart,  
4. He telleth the number of the stars,  
5. Great is our Lord, and mighty of  
strength,  
6. Yahweh upholdeth the afflicted,  
7. Sing to Yahweh with thanksgiving,  
8. He covereth the heavens with clouds,  
He causeth grass to grow on the  
mountains,  
9. ° He giveth ° to the beast its food,  
10. He delighteth not in the strength of the  
horse,  
11. Yahweh showeth favour to them that  
fear him,  
12. Praise Yahweh, O Jerusalem,  
13. For he strengthened the bars of thy  
gates,  
14. He maketh thy borders peaceful,  
15. He sendeth forth his commandment  
upon earth,  
16. He giveth snow like wool,  
17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels,  
18. He sendeth out his word and melteth  
them,  
19. He declareth his word to Jacob,  
20. Not thus hath he dealt with any  
nation,  
nor taketh pleasure in the legs of a man.  
to them that hope for his love.  
praise thy God, O Zion,  
he blessed thy sons within thee;  
he satisfieth thee with full-ripe wheat;  
right swiftly runneth his word.  
he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes;  
at his cold the waters ° stand still °.  
maketh his wind to blow,—waters  
flow.  
his statutes and judgements to Israel;  
° nor made known to them ° ° his  
judgements °.
- Hallelujah.

## Text-critical Notes

G again has the title *Ἀγγαίου καὶ Ζαχαρίου*. 1. Add *הַלְלוּ יְיָ*, as a psalm cannot well begin with *בִּי*, "for". Read, with Duhm, *זָמְרָה* for *זָמְרָה*, "to sing praise", or following G, *זָמְרָה*, "praise". Om., with G, *נְאֻמָּה*, "comely". 5. Read *מִסְפָּר הַכּוֹכָבִים*, "number", from the preceding verse. 8. This half-line is added, following Duhm, from Ps. 104<sup>14</sup>, and it occurs also in G, *יְעֹשֶׂב לְעֵבְרֵת הָאָדָם*. 9. Read *הַנִּהְיֶה* with the art. following the other participles. 17. Read, following Gunkel and others, *מִי יַעֲמֹד מִיָּמִים יַעֲמֹדִי* for *מִי יַעֲמֹד*, "who standeth?" 20. Read, with GST, *בְּלִי-יָדְעִים* for *בְּלִי-יָדְעִים*, "they did not know them". Read, with the Versions, *מִשְׁפָּטִים* for *מִשְׁפָּטִים*, "judgements".

1-6. The text of *v. 1* is a little uncertain, but *Praise* applies both to *our God* in the second half of the verse, as well as to *Yahweh*; the object of a verb occurs not infrequently in both halves of a verse in Hebrew poetry. The exhortation to praise God occurs in this form also in Ps. 33<sup>1</sup>, where it is coupled with the thought of rejoicing, and this emotion is felt pulsating throughout our psalm. The mention of the building up of *Jerusalem* (2) recalls the time soon after the Return from the Exile (Neh. 6<sup>1, 16</sup>, 7<sup>1, 2</sup>), and for the thought cp. Ps. 51<sup>18</sup>, 102<sup>16</sup>; so, too, the reference to *the dispersed of Israel* (cp. Isa. 56<sup>8</sup>); but it is not to be inferred from this that our psalm belongs to so early a period; it is merely the recalling of events in the past history of the

people for which praise to God is due. In further reference, perhaps, to those who in distant lands had sojourned with sorrowful hearts, it is said that God *healeth the broken in heart* (cp. Ps. 34<sup>18</sup>, though in a different connexion), and *bindeth up their wounds*, meant metaphorically; the two halves of the verse are combined from Isa. 61<sup>1</sup>, cp. also Ezek. 34<sup>16</sup>. Then an entirely different subject is dealt with, based doubtless on Isa. 40<sup>26</sup>; it is said that God *telleth the number of the stars*, and *calleth them all by names*, meaning that they obey his voice when called, not that he gave them their names, the point being that, though regarded as deities by the Gentile nations, they were subject to Yahweh, who created them (cp. Gen. 1<sup>16-18</sup>, Job 9<sup>9</sup>, 38<sup>7, 31, 32</sup>, Am. 5<sup>8</sup>, and Ps. 19<sup>1-6</sup>); the names were given to the stars by their worshippers (cp. Deut. 4<sup>19</sup>). The stars are mentioned in order to lay stress on God's creative power, and therefore as a further reason for offering him praise. Quite unconnected with the foregoing, but as though to contrast great things with small, the psalmist turns from contemplating the vault of heaven to men on earth: *Yahweh upholdeth the afflicted*, a word often used by those oppressed by the wicked (e.g., Ps. 76<sup>9</sup>), but humbles the wicked by bringing them *to the ground* (cp. Ps. 146<sup>9</sup>).

With 7 a new section begins, in which the same variety of subject-matter recurs. It is again introduced by an exhortation to give thanks (cp. Pss. 95<sup>1, 2</sup>, 119<sup>172</sup>) and praise to Yahweh, special mention being made of doing so with the *harp* (on this see further on Ps. 150). Yahweh is then proclaimed as the God of Nature (8), who *covereth the heavens with clouds and prepareth rain for the earth* (cp. Job 5<sup>10</sup>), so essential for a country like Palestine, and which *causeth the grass to grow on the mountains* (cp. Ps. 104<sup>14</sup>, Job 38<sup>27</sup>), thus (9) affording *food* for the animal world (cp. Ps. 104<sup>14, 27, 28</sup>, 145<sup>15</sup>); even the young ravens are not forgotten (cp. Ps. 104<sup>31</sup>, Job 41). But it is not physical strength (10) whether in beast (cp. Ps. 33<sup>17</sup>) or in man (cp. Ps. 33<sup>16</sup>, see also Am. 2<sup>15</sup>), gained by benefitting from the products of the soil, that is pleasing to Yahweh (11)—his *favour* is towards *them that fear him*, and who *hope*—i.e., put their trust—in *his love* (cp. Ps. 33<sup>18</sup>).

With 12 a new beginning is made; the Septuagint begins a new psalm here, again assigning its authorship to Haggai and Zechariah, as in the title of Ps. 146. *Jerusalem* is now called upon to *praise Yahweh*, and further reasons are given why praise is due to him. It is somewhat striking that while hitherto all the sentences have been participial, here (13) we have suddenly verbs in the perfect: *for he strengthened the bars of thy gates, he kept safe thy sons within thee*, followed again by participles, making *peaceful thy borders* . . . with a present sense. This reads as though reference were being made to some recent attack on Jerusalem, which had been withstood. In consequence of this, peace and well-being reign in the land (14): *He maketh thy borders*

*peaceful, he satisfieth thee with full-ripe wheat*, lit. "fat of wheat" (cp. Ps. 81<sup>10</sup>). The words which follow (15), *He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth . . .*, may refer either to what has preceded, or to what follows; they would be appropriate to either. At any rate, there is once more a sudden change of subject, and in 16-18 Yahweh is again lauded as the God of Nature, who sends *snow* (cp. Job 37<sup>6</sup>), *hoar-frost*, and *ice* (cp. Job 38<sup>29, 30</sup>) when he sends his *cold*; they all melt at his word when the warm *wind* blows.

Just as the command of Yahweh in the world of Nature receives immediate obedience, so must it be also in the higher creation—namely, among his own people (19, 20), to whom *he declareth his word, his statutes and judgements*; Israel alone had been privileged to be instructed in these divine precepts.

### *Religious Teaching*

In this psalm, again, the nature of its contents demanded so much reference to its religious teaching in the exegetical notes, that a special section on this does not seem called for.

## PSALM 148

IN striking contrast to the preceding psalm, the subject-matter of this Hymn of Praise is notable for the ordered lines of thought it contains. The whole is an exhortation to praise Yahweh: first, the highest order of heavenly beings; then, sun, moon, and stars, and the lesser heavens (on these see the notes), and, lastly, the waters beneath the heavens, though in the upper regions. All these are of eternal duration. That concludes the first division of the psalm. The second deals with the earth; but here, unlike the enumeration in the former half, the psalmist begins with the lower creation, all parts of which are bidden to praise Yahweh. In the personification of the waters ancient myths find their echoes, while in that of fire and hail, etc., must be discerned the remnants of animistic conceptions. To the singer, however, these are all probably nothing more than poetical pictures.

There can be little doubt that *The Song of the Three Holy Children*, 28-68, in the Apocrypha, was inspired by this psalm.

The date of the psalm is late post-exilic; there are several indications which point to this; they will be referred to in the notes.

The rhythm is, with the exception of v. 8, uniformly 3 : 3.

### *Hallelujah.*

- |                                     |                              |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Praise Yahweh from the heavens : | praise him in the heights ;  |
| 2. Praise him, all ye his angels,   | praise him, all ye his host. |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 3. Praise him, sun and moon,  | praise him, all ye stars of light.  |
| 4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,   | and ye waters ° above the heavens.  |
| 5. Let them praise the name of Yahweh,  | for he commanded, and they were created;                                  |
| 6. And he hath established them for ever and ever,                              | a statute he ordained, ° and they shall not transgress it °.              |
| 7. Praise Yahweh from the earth,  | ye dragons and all deeps;   |
| 8.  | Fire and hail,<br>Snow and vapour,<br>Stormy wind<br>Fulfilling his word; |
| 9. The mountains and all hills,   | fruitful trees and all cedars,  |
| 10. Beasts and all cattle,  | creeping things and winged birds.   |
| 11. Kings of the earth and all peoples,   | princes and all judges of the earth;                                      |
| 12. Young men, yea also maidens,  | Old men together with youths.   |
| 13. Let them praise the name of Yahweh,<br>His glory is above earth and heaven; | for his name alone is exalted,  |
|   | 14. and he hath lifted up the horn of his people;                         |
| A praise for all his loved ones,  | for the children of Israel, ° his friends °.                              |
|   | Hallelujah.   |

## Text-critical Notes

*Title*, G again ascribes this psalm to Haggai and Zechariah. 4. Om. אֲשֶׁר, "which", for the sake of the rhythm. 6. Read וְלֹא יַעֲבֹרֵי for וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר, "and he shall not transgress". 14. Read עַם-קִרְבָּי, "the people of those that are near him", for עַם-קִרְבּוֹ, "the people of his nearness".

1. In the exhortation to *praise Yahweh from the heavens*, the thought is that in the (implied) innermost heavens Yahweh alone is present. He is to be praised *from the heavens*—i.e., the outer heavens, which, though *in the heights*, are outside the unapproachable dwelling-place of Yahweh himself. This points to a developed doctrine of the divine transcendence, which indicates a comparatively late date for our psalm; the subject will be further dealt with under v. 4.

First (2) the *angels*, or Yahweh's *host* of attendant "messengers" (cp. Ps. 103<sup>20, 21</sup>), are called upon to *praise* him; then (3) the *sun and moon*, and *all ye stars of light*—i.e., shining stars; these are all conceived of as personalities (cp. Ps. 104<sup>4</sup>). The *heavens of heavens* (4) is an expression which bears out what has just been said about the belief regarding the differences of the heavenly spheres. According to the teaching of the Rabbis, which is the development of earlier traditional ideas, the heavens consist of seven divisions (*Mechiza*, cp. 2 Cor. 12<sup>2, 4</sup>), arranged in seven concentric circles; the innermost of these is the abode of the Almighty, who sits there in unapproachable majesty on "the throne of glory". This seventh heaven is screened from the other heavens by a curtain of clouds (*Pargód*); outside of this is where the angels dwell; they may hear the voice of the Almighty, but are not permitted to look upon him. Ideas more or less similar to these were doubtless in vogue by the time our psalmist wrote. Then, in the mention of the *waters above the heavens*, we have the echo of the Babylonian Creation-myth reflected in Gen. 1<sup>7</sup>; they, too, are thought of as personified beings. The words (5) *for he commanded and they*

were created, are important as emphasizing that all these heavenly beings were subordinate to Yahweh; our psalmist was obviously well acquainted with the fact that among the Gentiles the constellations were worshipped as gods and goddesses. The thought of their being but creatures of the Most High is further emphasized by the statement that (6) *he hath established them for ever and ever*, as those, namely, who always obeyed his behests and carried out his will; this was a *statute* which *he ordained* from their creation, which *they* could not transgress. 7-10. After having thus called upon all the heavenly beings to praise Yahweh *from the heavens*, the psalmist utters a similar exhortation to all below to praise him *from the earth*. That he begins with the (to us) inanimate creation is not without significance; for to him the various elements enumerated were all personified, and vastly more powerful than men. He naturally, therefore, begins with them. Of special interest is the mention of *ye dragons and all deeps*. Likely enough as it may be that our psalmist was unaware of the ultimate origin and meaning of the myth which he, like others, here re-echoed (cp. Ps. 74<sup>13</sup>, Isa. 27<sup>1</sup>, Rev. 20<sup>2</sup>)—namely, the Babylonian Tiamat-myth, yet he would certainly have known by traditional teaching that the *dragons and all deeps* signified the embodiment of the principle of all evil; so that in calling upon these to praise Yahweh—i.e., to acknowledge him and his supremacy—he is, in effect, envisaging the conditions indicated, e.g., by such a passage as Rev. 21<sup>1</sup>, where, by the words “and the sea is no more”, the Seer implies that the element of evil is eliminated! That this is no mere flight of the imagination is shown by what follows (8-13) in which the entire earth-creation is thought of as praising the name of Yahweh. For his details the psalmist is largely indebted to earlier singers, but this does not detract from the beauty of and edifying way in which he constructs his poem. For *fire and hail* cp. Ps. 18<sup>12</sup>, 105<sup>32</sup>; they give out heat and cold; for *snow and vapour* cp. Ps. 147<sup>16</sup>, Gen. 19<sup>28</sup>, which give out cold and heat; the antithesis is evidently not accidental; for *stormy wind* cp. 107<sup>25</sup>; these all, like the angels, *fulfil his word*, or, as it is expressed in Ps. 103<sup>20</sup>, “hearken unto the voice of his word”; for *mountains and trees* cp. Isa. 44<sup>23</sup>; as to *beasts and all cattle*, by which are meant wild and domestic animals, and *creeping things and winged birds*, the psalmist evidently has Gen. 1<sup>20, 24, 25</sup> in mind. 11-13. Finally, the psalmist addresses his exhortation to man, beginning with those in high estate: *kings and their peoples, princes and all judges*; and then he calls upon humanity in general, young and old, to *praise the name of Yahweh* (cp. v. 5), whose *glory is above earth and heaven* (cp. Ps. 113<sup>4</sup>).

There is some little difficulty about 14; Gunkel contends that the psalm proper ends with 14<sup>a</sup>, and that the remainder of that verse is a kind of footnote added by the psalmist to indicate the nature of

his psalm. Against this, Herkenne makes 14<sup>b</sup> the end of the psalm, and regards all the rest of this verse as belonging to 147<sup>20</sup>, whence it has been misplaced to its present position. While objections may be raised against both of these opinions, each has something to justify it, for the psalm certainly ends somewhat awkwardly.

*His friends*, lit. "the people of his near ones"—*i.e.*, the nation which, by acknowledging and worshipping Yahweh as their God, had been brought close to him (cp. Deut. 4<sup>7</sup>).

### *Religious Teaching*

There are two subjects contained in the religious teaching of this psalm which demand brief notice. The first is this: however much there may be in it which, in view of the advanced knowledge of later ages, cannot be accepted, such as the idea of the inanimate world and of animals praising God, we can appreciate the psalmist's conception, even though erroneous, of the instinct of worship as innate in the whole of created matter. The second is more important and far-reaching—namely, the fact of mortal men joining with the heavenly hosts—traditionally called "angels"—in the worship of God. That it is wholly impossible for us, as finite mortals, to conceive either of the nature of heavenly beings or of the way in which they praise and worship God, need not detract from our belief in their existence, nor in the fact of their offering worship. In the former case we have, at any rate, the belief and teaching of our Lord about the existence and activity of beings of a higher order than mortal man (*e.g.*, Mark 12<sup>35</sup>, 13<sup>32</sup>, Luke 15<sup>10</sup>). It may be urged, further, that, given even the most rudimentary belief in a spiritual world, belief in the existence of spiritual beings is inevitable. We need not accept in its details the developed angelology of the Apocalyptic Literature, which has here and there unduly impressed itself on some of our liturgical formulas (*e.g.*, the mention of Cherubim and Seraphim), but to doubt the reality of the existence of spiritual beings, who, even like ourselves, are impelled to worship God, is, in effect, to deny the spiritual part of man's nature.

In this, then, we may feel wholly at one with the religious teaching of our psalmist—namely, in the conviction that in our worship we are joined by spiritual beings in other spheres, and—may we not add?—by many a dear and familiar friend.

### PSALM 149

ONE cannot but be struck, on reading this psalm, by the contrast between the call to worship in the first half, and the bellicose tone of

the second. The somewhat unedifying spirit of the latter is, however, comprehensible if, as we hold, this psalm was written by some poet on learning of the success of the Jewish army (see *v.* 4), and that he composed it in celebration of the victory, with the intention that it should be sung as a thanksgiving to God in the temple on the return of the victorious warriors; they had fought, as the reiterated expression of "the godly ones"—*i.e.*, God's loved ones—shows, in the conviction that they were fighting the wars of the Lord. The psalm was written, that is to say, for a special occasion, and was not intended for general liturgical use. This would explain the otherwise incongruous combination of men singing praises to God with their mouth while holding in their hands a two-edged sword (*v.* 6).

A song of praise, sung while a dance-step was being performed in honour of the Deity, accompanied by the clashing of arms, was frequent among all peoples of antiquity (see the notes). To modern ideas such a mode of thanksgiving does not appeal; but in those days things were different, and, in any case, the intention was well meant.

Our interpretation of the psalm, it is granted, differs from that of some other commentators. Gunkel, Kittel, and Herkenne, for example, take it to be eschatological, and there are certainly some indications which support this view; but we doubt, on the one hand, whether the realistic presentation in the psalm justifies such an interpretation; and, in the second place, it must be insisted, eschatology usually expresses itself in a more definite and detailed manner than is offered in this late psalm. A very different view is that held by Hans Schmidt, who thinks that it was sung on the festival of Yahweh's ascent upon his throne, and regards the psalm as very ancient (*uralt*). With this, it must be confessed, we disagree entirely; the psalms sung at this festival were of a very different character (see, *e.g.*, 93-99); and the only passage (apart from *v.* 2, which is quite general in meaning) in our present psalm at all appropriate to that occasion is obtained by a very daring emendation ("Let the pious exult in the King of glory, let the perfect draw nigh to his dwelling-place with shouting", *v.* 5).

This psalm is assigned by many scholars to Maccabæan times, and there is undoubtedly considerable justification for this contention: the feeling of victory gained by Yahweh's favour (*v.* 4, see 1 Macc. 4<sup>30-33</sup>), the desire of vengeance on their enemies (*vv.* 7, 8, see 1 Macc. 7<sup>46-49</sup>), and the parallelism of thought between *v.* 6 and 2 Macc. 15<sup>27</sup>: "And so, fighting with their hands while praying to God in their hearts, they slew no less than thirty-five thousand men". There is, moreover, the phrase "the assembly of the pious" (*Hasidim*) occurring also in 1 Macc. 2<sup>42</sup>. But see Vol. I, pp. 69 f. It is quite possible that the psalm may have been written in reference to a victory gained

over some neighbouring people, the account of which has not come down to us; the records of Jewish history during most of the period from 400 B.C. onwards leave much to be desired.

The date of the psalm is, without doubt, late post-exilic; linguistic expressions support this (*e.g.*, in *v.* 7).

The metre, with the exception of the first verse, is 3 : 3.

### *Hallelujah.*

1. Sing to Yahweh  
A new song,  
His praise in the assembly of the pious.
2. Let Israel rejoice in ° his Maker °, let the sons-of-Zion be glad in their King;
3. Let them praise his name in dance, with drum and harp let them sing to him.
4. For Yahweh ° doth favour ° his people, he adorneth the meek with victory.
5. Let the pious exult ° triumphantly °, let them shout ° in endless joy °.
6. High praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,
7. To take vengeance upon the nations, and reprisals against the peoples;
8. To bind their kings with chains, and their princes with fetters of iron;
9. To fulfil the written decree, glory 'tis to all his pious ones.

### *Hallelujah.*

### *Text-critical Notes*

2. Read, with GS, בַּעֲשֵׂי בַּעֲשֵׂי, "his Makers", which may, however, be a plural of "majesty". 4. Some commentators would read the perf. רָצָה, "he hath shown favour". 5. Lit. "in glory" בְּכָבוֹד. Read, following Isa. 35<sup>10</sup>, 51<sup>11</sup>, 61<sup>7</sup>, עַל-מִשְׁכְּבֵיהֶם for בְּשִׁמְחַת עוֹלָם, "on their beds". 9. Om. בָּהֶם, "among them", for the sake of the rhythm, and the general sense.

1. The exhortation to praise *Yahweh* is addressed specifically to the *pious*, or godly ones, the *Hasidim*, who are often mentioned in some of the later psalms. In general, the term is applied to those who in manner of living and steadfastness in worship sought to serve *Yahweh* faithfully; but in later days, as we learn, *e.g.*, in 1 Macc. 2<sup>42</sup><sup>a</sup>, it was used in a narrower sense in reference to those who had formed a party, the members of which adhered with fanatical strictness to what they conceived to be the demands of the Law. Whether, in this psalm, the term is used in this party sense or not is a disputed point; but the threefold mention of them (*vv.* 1, 5, 9), and especially their war-like character (*vv.* 6-8 and see 2 Macc. 14<sup>6</sup>), suggests the latter. On the whole subject see Vol. I, pp. 67 ff. That it was a *new song* (cp. Ps. 33<sup>3</sup>, 40<sup>3</sup>, 96<sup>1</sup>, 98<sup>1</sup>) may be significant, for it was of a type which was new—viz., a song of triumphant thanksgiving sung by warriors in their armour on their return from battle. There would, on the other hand, be nothing new in a song which dealt with the subjects of eschatology or the divine kingship. 2, 3. These victorious *Hasidim* are naturally spoken of as representatives of the nation, *Israel*, and *sons-of-Zion*, for they had fought on behalf of their people in a holy war as champions of *Yahweh*, by whose help they had been



victorious. They are called upon, therefore, to *rejoice* in their *Maker*, and to *be glad in their King*; with the former of these two titles as applied to Yahweh cp. Isa. 44<sup>2</sup>, 51<sup>13</sup>; the latter occurs often in the psalms and elsewhere; but it is by no means necessarily in an eschatological context, nor yet in connexion with the festival of Yahweh's ascent upon his throne. For the sacred *dance* in celebration of victory cp. Exod. 15<sup>20, 21</sup>, Judith 15<sup>12, 13</sup>, and for its wide prevalence both among the Israelites and other nations of antiquity see Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance*, pp. 159 ff. (1923). The song of praise was sung during the sacred dance, to the accompaniment of *drum* and *harp* (on these see the notes of Ps. 150).

In the verses which follow, 4-6, due acknowledgement is made to Yahweh as the Author of victory; he has shown *favour* to his *people* (cp. Ps. 147<sup>11</sup>); the mention of *the meek*, or oppressed, indicates that the people had gone through a period of ill-treatment, an inappropriate expression if the reference were to Maccabæan times (what is said in 1 Macc. 1<sup>29-40</sup> does not refer to the meek). The expression *adorneth with victory* means that the warriors are glorified, and therefore honoured by their people for their achievement. The incongruous combination of praising God while the weapons of war are still being carried has been referred to above. Equally distasteful to our ears is the spirit displayed in vv. 7, 8, where, in accordance with the usage of the times, even the most highly-placed were subjected to humiliating ill-treatment. 9. That, in justification of this, appeal is made to the *written decree*—whether we are to understand by this a reference to such passages as Isa. 45<sup>14</sup>, 49<sup>7, 23</sup>, and others, or whether this is what the psalmist conceives of as the ordained divine judgement—only emphasizes the feeling of relief that a psalm of this nature is very exceptional. It does not figure in the Liturgy of the Jewish Church.

The religious teaching of the psalm centres in the call to praise God; this has been already dealt with in the section on religious teaching of a number of other psalms.

### PSALM 150

THE appropriateness of this psalm, with its tenfold exhortation to praise, as the conclusion to the Psalter, needs no insisting on. Its place and composition may well have been the work of the final redactor of the various collections of psalms which had accumulated through the centuries.

The heavenly hosts are first called upon to praise God, as in Ps. 148<sup>1, 2</sup>; then all the worshippers, to the accompaniment of wind- and

string-instruments, as well as with instruments of percussion. Judging from the concluding words of the psalm, it was sung by the whole body of worshippers, though probably "everything that hath breath" included the animal-creation, as in Ps. 148<sup>10</sup>. It is to be noted that eight musical instruments are mentioned as used in worship, including two kinds of cymbals (see exegetical notes); elsewhere in the *Psalms* two others are mentioned, the *hasôs'rah*, "trumpet" (98<sup>8</sup>), and the *ḥalîl*, "pipe" (87<sup>7</sup>, the verb only); and in other books three others occur as used for religious purposes—namely, *mesîltaîm*, "cymbals" (often in *Chronicles*), *m'na'an'îm*, "rattle" (mentioned only in 2 Sam. 6<sup>5</sup>), and *qeren*, "horn" (Lev. 25<sup>9</sup>, Josh. 6<sup>5</sup>, 1 Chron. 25<sup>5</sup>). These, like some of those occurring in our psalm, were used for secular as well as for religious purposes; there is but one instrument of a purely secular character, mentioned in the Old Testament, the *šališîm*, probably some form of the tambourine (only in 1 Sam. 18<sup>8</sup>). The only others are found in the book of *Daniel*, and do not concern us; but they are worth enumerating for completeness' sake (they all occur in chap. 3<sup>5</sup>, etc.); two of them are clearly of Semitic origin, the *qarna* "cornet", lit. "horn"; the *mašroqitha*, "flute". lit. "whistle"; three are of Greek origin, the *qithrôs* or *qithras* (κίθαρς), "harp"; *sabbêka* (σαμβύκη), a triangular instrument with four strings; the *pesanterin* (ψαλτήριον), also a stringed instrument with a sounding-board beneath the strings, probably six in number; and finally, the *sumphonia* (συμφωνία), an instrument corresponding to "bag-pipe"; whether this was of Semitic or Greek origin is uncertain.

That none of these is mentioned in our psalm makes it extremely likely that its date of composition was, at any rate, prior to that of the book of *Daniel* (166-5 B.C.).

Of all the other instruments, including those mentioned in our psalm, some account will be given in the exegetical notes. Our knowledge of ancient musical instruments among the Semites has been much increased by the recent publication of Dr. Galpin's work, *The Music of the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians* (1937).

The metre is 3 : 3, with the exception of the last verse, which, as so often, has a different metre; it ends with a line of four beats. The final "Hallelujah" is not included in the metre.

#### *Hallelujah.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Praise God in his sanctuary,                 | praise him in his mighty firmament.                     |
| 2. Praise him for his acts of power,            | praise him according to the abundance of his greatness. |
| 3. Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn, | praise him with harp and lyre.                          |
| 4. Praise him with drum and dance,              | praise him with strings and flute.                      |
| 5. Praise him with resounding cymbals,          | praise him with clanging cymbals.                       |
| 6. Let everything that hath breath praise Yah.  |   |
| Hallelujah.                                     |   |

1, 2. Though not specified, as in Ps. 148<sup>1, 2</sup>, the heavenly hosts are here clearly exhorted to offer their praise to *God*; *his sanctuary*, as in Ps. 102<sup>19</sup>, refers to the heavenly temple (cp. Ps. 114, 20<sup>7</sup>), and *his mighty firmament* (lit. "the firmament of his strength") means the heavens, as in Gen. 1<sup>6</sup>, "And God called the firmament heaven", the creation of which was one of his mighty acts (see Ps. 19<sup>1</sup>), "the firmament showeth his handywork", while the many other acts of creation above and below showed forth *the abundance of his greatness*.

In the rest of the psalm the musical instruments used in the temple worship are enumerated. Excepting for a few incidental references in other psalms and elsewhere, this detailed list is unique in the Old Testament; it will, therefore, be not inappropriate if we devote some special attention to these different kinds of instruments.

The offering of praise to deities in song accompanied by musical instruments is, as ever-increasing evidence shows, of great antiquity. On the analogy of what is known of the usage among other Semitic peoples, we are justified in concluding that among the earliest Hebrews similar forms of worship were in vogue. Just as with the songs of praise as we now have them, so with the musical instruments mentioned, both represent the final stage of a long preceding history. But in the case of the musical instruments the evidence tends to show that the process of development was much slower; in other words, the musical instruments mentioned in our psalm did not, in most cases, differ from what had been in use for many centuries. Archæological research has given us a great deal of information both as to the forms and uses of these instruments.

Coming now to our psalm; it is impossible to discern any underlying purpose in the order in which the various instruments are mentioned, whether as to their antiquity, importance, or type; they seem to be enumerated quite at random. First we have the *ram's-horn* (*šôphâr*). To connect this with the Egyptian *thupar* is now shown to be erroneous, for there is no such word as this latter. It is more probably the equivalent of the Assyrian *šapparu*, the wild mountain-goat; so that "ram" must not be understood in the strictly modern sense. There is, however, no doubt that in already early times *šôphâr* was adapted and used in the sense of "horn", or "clarion". As a rule, in the Old Testament, the word occurs alone; but its fuller form is *šôphâr ha-yôbel*, lit. "the horn of the ram" (Josh. 6<sup>4</sup>); and sometimes *yôbêl* stands alone in the sense of "horn" (Exod. 19<sup>13</sup>, Lev. 25<sup>13</sup>, 27<sup>18</sup>, Num. 36<sup>4</sup>), but the word means lit. "he that leads"—viz., the flock. In the Old Testament it is not often used in connexion with the temple worship; it is more often a signal of alarm, as, e.g., in Judg. 3<sup>27</sup>, 1 Sam. 13<sup>3</sup>, or it is sounded to call warriors together, Isa. 18<sup>3</sup>, or as a signal for attack, Job 39<sup>24, 25</sup>; in Am. 3<sup>6</sup>, Hos. 5<sup>6</sup>, Jer. 6<sup>1</sup>, Ezek. 33<sup>3</sup>, its blast gives warning of approaching danger. According to 2 Sam. 15<sup>10</sup> and else-

where we read of its being sounded in order to announce the reign of a new king. This is of special importance in view of Ps. 81<sup>3</sup>: "Sound the *šôphâr* at the new moon", for there can be little doubt that this is in reference to the New-Year festival, when the kingship of Yahweh was proclaimed, just as at the Babylonian New-Year's Day festival the first appearance of the crescent moon was hailed by trumpet-blasts. See also Ps. 47<sup>6</sup>, 98<sup>6</sup>. That the *šôphâr* was one of the most ancient of musical instruments is shown by Galpin, *op. cit.*, pp. 21 ff. It is worth noting that in our psalm no mention is made of the *ḥašôš-râh*, "trumpet", which occurs in Ps. 98<sup>6</sup> together with the *šôphâr*, and was, therefore, a different kind of wind-instrument (cp. Hos. 5<sup>8</sup>); although not occurring elsewhere in the *Psalms*, it is frequently mentioned in *Chronicles* as a sacred instrument. No doubt it was of much later date, since it was made of metal, brass, or silver. Josephus (*Antiq.* iii, 291) says that "in length it was little less than a cubit; it was composed of a narrow tube, somewhat thicker than a flute, but with so much breadth as was sufficient for admission of the breath of a man's mouth; it ended in the form of a bell, like common trumpets". This is probably the trumpet represented on the Arch of Titus. Passing mention must also be made of the *qeren*, "horn"; its occurrence in the sense of a wind-instrument is extremely rare, and it is never used in the *Psalms*; but from 1 Chron. 25<sup>5</sup> it is to be gathered that it had a religious use; otherwise it is mentioned only in Josh. 6<sup>5</sup>, where it is sounded in connexion with the falling down of the walls of Jericho. Possibly it may be equivalent to the Akkadian *karanu*, mentioned by Galpin (*op. cit.*, pp. 23 f.), which was evidently a trumpet used for warlike purposes, for "the name survives in the Persian *karana* . . . the name is also found in Sanskrit records".

The next two instruments mentioned in our psalm are stringed instruments, the *harp* (*nebel*) and the *lyre* (*kinnôr*). Ancient as these are, it need hardly be said that the use of stringed instruments points to a much higher stage of culture. The word *nebel* means also "wine-skin" (e.g., 1 Sam. 1<sup>24</sup>, 10<sup>3</sup> and elsewhere); the musical instrument was no doubt so called on account of its gourd, or bottle-like, sound-chest. Excavations at Ur show that two types of harp were used for religious purposes: a large one which rested on the ground, and a smaller one which could be carried and played in processions. The Sumerian names of these two are, respectively, *zag-sal* and *mirîtu*, the latter being the more primitive one. Both are mentioned, together with the seven-stringed lyre, in a poem in praise of the temple of Enki at Eridu (circa 2200 B.C.). According to Galpin, it is the *mirîtu* which is "evidently related to the Hebrew *nebel*" (*op. cit.*, p. 29). It is often mentioned in the *Psalms* in connexion with worship (33<sup>2</sup>, 57<sup>8</sup>, 71<sup>22</sup>, 81<sup>2</sup>, 92<sup>3</sup>, 108<sup>2</sup>, and in *Chronicles*). A still smaller one was that mentioned in 1 Sam. 18<sup>6</sup>,

the *šālīš*, its name being given in reference to its "three" strings; a similar instrument was in use among the Assyrians, and was called the *šālaštu*. Mention must be made also of another kind of harp, the *nebel 'āsôr*, "ten(-stringed) harp", which occurs in Ps. 33<sup>2</sup>, 144<sup>9</sup>, cp. 92<sup>3</sup>; similarly in Mesopotamia, as Galpin points out (*op. cit.*, p. 30), there was an instrument of the harp-kind called *eširtu*, "ten-strings".

As to the *kinnôr*, "lyre", it must be noted, to quote Galpin again, that it "differs entirely from the harp in having the strings stretched over, or attached to, a bridge placed on the sound-board, instead of passing into the sound-chest itself" (*op. cit.*, p. 31). The *kinnôr* was the most popular musical instrument among the Semites generally, and, as the Old Testament shows, it was used in ordinary life (e.g., Isa. 5<sup>12</sup>, 24<sup>8</sup>), as well as for religious purposes, as indicated by its frequent mention in the *Psalms*. Very interesting is the representation in one of the tombs (circa 1950 B.C.) at Beni-Hassan of a Semite playing an elaborately shaped lyre, called by the Egyptians the *kennarn-t*, clearly equivalent to the *kinnôr*. Among the Sumerians the lyre was called *al-gar*, of which there were several shapes and sizes; in the temple ritual it had an important place; in a hymn to Ishtar, for example, it is said: "I will speak to thee with the *al-gar*, whose sound is sweet"; and in Enki's temple at Eridu we are told that "the holy *al-gar* sings in reverence". The Assyrian equivalent was *šebitu*, meaning "seven-stringed", and corresponding to the Hebrew *šiva'* or *šeba'*, Arabic *saba'*, "seven"; in certain dialects of Aramaic it appears as *šeb'ka'*, the *sabb'ka'* mentioned in Dan. 3<sup>5</sup>, 7<sup>10</sup>. It is described, to quote Galpin again, "as being of triangular outline, and like a boat with a ladder joined to it. The boat-shaped lyre discovered at Ur answers in a peculiar manner to this description, and makes it clear why a military siege-engine, the *sambuca*, was named after it" (*op. cit.*, p. 34).

The many representations of harps and lyres given on ancient monuments, Egyptian, Sumerian, and Assyrian, as well as on Jewish coins, show that they differed greatly in size and shape, as well as in the number of strings they had; the ancient Hebrew instruments doubtless partook of this variety, if not to the same extent. They were held in the left hand when carried, and played with the fingers of the right hand, though a *plectrum*, of wood or other substance, was also used.

The next instrument to be mentioned in our psalm (4) is one of percussion, the *tôph*, "drum". This, too, was used for secular purposes (e.g., Gen. 31<sup>27</sup>, Isa. 5<sup>12</sup>), as well as in worship (2 Sam. 6<sup>5</sup>, Ps. 81<sup>2</sup>, 149<sup>3</sup>, cp. 68<sup>25</sup>). The Sumerian name for "drum" was *ub*, with the determinative prefix for "skin" or "leather", *su*. "The hollow log of wood or the empty gourd has been developed into an instrument not only rhythmic, but tonal, by the addition of a stretched skin. For, whereas to the ordinary ear the sound of the drum is

accounted as mere noise, to the delicate appreciation of the Oriental the 'note' of the instrument is not only a source of pleasure, but distinctly tuneable" (Galpin, *op. cit.*, p. 2). Drums were of various sizes, the large ones stationary, the smaller carried in procession. The *ub* was a small drum; but another type, called in Sumerian *balag*, Assyrian *balaggu*, was of a large, as well as of a small, kind. Its use in worship is often mentioned on the inscriptions. That drums were used by the Israelites of all periods cannot admit of doubt; the question arises, however, whether the *tôph* was a drum as generally understood, and not rather a "timbrel" or "tambourine"; we have rendered it "drum" because *tôph* is the only word in the Old Testament which occurs for either "drum" or "timbrel"; and we know from the usage among other Semites that the drum, in the ordinary sense, played an important part in worship. Galpin mentions, it is true, another Sumerian name for drum, the *dub*, and compares it with the Arabic *dabdab*, which might suggest a connexion with *tôph* from an onomatopæic point of view; but he compares the Hebrew *tôph* rather with the Sumerian word for "timbrel", *adâp*, which gave its name to the *duff*, or square-shaped timbrel, credited by Arabic tradition to Jubal, the coppersmith, as its inventor (*op. cit.*, p. 9), because the determinative *urudu*, "copper", sometimes precedes the word; see Gen. 4<sup>22</sup>. Inscriptions show it to have been used in temple worship.

In the verse before us (4), the sacred *dance* is mentioned in close connexion with the *drum*, or timbrel; while the playing of this instrument during the dance was, no doubt, primarily for rhythmic purposes, it may well have had the effect of arousing excitement in the performers; the word used, *mâhól*, comes from the root meaning to "whirl", which suggests a wild kind of dance. In the same verse which we are considering (4), mention is made of *strings* (*minnim*), and *flute* (*ûgâb*) (cp. Gen. 4<sup>21</sup>, Job 21<sup>12</sup>, 30<sup>31</sup>); the combination reads strangely, especially as the stringed instruments have just been referred to in the preceding verse. The only other occurrence of *minnim* is in Ps. 45<sup>8</sup>, where the text is certainly corrupt. Now, the common name for "flute" in Mesopotamia is *ti-gi*, which, as Galpin points out, is identical with the *ûgâb* of the Hebrews; but the *ti-gi* is also called the *imin-e*, "the seven-note"; is it possible that we have in *minnim* some form of a loan-word from Mesopotamia? "Praise him with the seven-note flute" would give a more logical sense than "strings and flute". However this may be, the flute, *ti-gi*, the simple reed-tube, held vertically, and sounded by blowing across one of the open ends, was highly esteemed in the temple ritual in Mesopotamia (Galpin, *op. cit.*, p. 13). In the next verse (5) two types of cymbals are mentioned, called respectively *resounding cymbals* and *clanging cymbals*, lit. "cymbals of hearing", i.e., which can be well heard—and "cymbals of a blast". They are

mentioned elsewhere only in 2 Sam. 6<sup>b</sup>. It is probable that the reference here is to a very early type of cymbals which was retained in the temple ritual, and a highly developed type. Galpin tells us that at Kish and Ur "certain curiously curved blades of thin copper have been found, generally in pairs; at first they were considered to have been weapons of war, but they are now recognized as 'dancing sticks', the metal blade having been fixed to a wooden handle. In one instance, at Ur—they were discovered in connexion with the remains of a lyre, and on a gold cylinder-seal also found at Ur, as well as in mother-of-pearl inlay at Kish—their real use is shown: on the seal, which dates from about the year 2700 B.C., a dancer to the strains of the lyre is depicted and, on either side, attendants clapping the curved sticks together in measured cadence" (*op. cit.*, p. 1). Here we have, then, the earliest form of cymbals; to these would correspond the first-mentioned cymbals in our psalm, used presumably as an accompaniment to the sacred dance, like the *tôph*. It is, however, somewhat strange that the word for cymbals, *šelselim*, should be used twice over in the same verse, when the more common word *mšiltāim* (from the same root) was available; it occurs frequently in *Chronicles*, and is used only in connexion with worship; and, being dual in form, it obviously corresponds to the two "dancing-sticks" mentioned above, which represent the earliest form of cymbals. The later form, *clanging cymbals*, are no doubt the same as those described by Josephus, who says that they consisted of "two large metal plates, which were struck together" (*Antiq.*, vii, 306).

It will thus be seen that, thanks to the labours of archæologists, our knowledge of the subject of ancient musical instruments has been much increased.

Our main interest, however, in the present connexion, is the evidence offered by this psalm of the use of so many musical instruments in the temple worship. The triumphant strains resounding in this Hallelujah finale make a noble and fitting conclusion to the *Psalms*, the grandest symphony of praise to God ever composed on earth.





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